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A COMMISSION

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As this Book bears no writer's name, the Publishers feel bound to state that they have seen documents and letters from well-known persons, which are more than enough to guarantee the genuineness of the narrative.

PREFACE.

THE following recollections of Service in the Ranks of the English Army were originally written as a means of keeping fresh in my memory an interesting "Chapter of my Life," the details of which would otherwise most certainly have been forgotten amidst occupations of a different but more natural character. I therefore purposely refrained from describing those scenes of the military life in which, either by accident or by good fortune, I was not called to bear a part.

But considering that my service in the Ranks was very short, I was fortunate in having to undertake most of the different duties that fall to the lot of our soldiers during times of peace; and these personal experiences are now published, not with any attempt at making an exciting tale, but solely

with the hope that a simple account of the life and habits of our soldiers may find some interested readers, and possibly give some of them a fairer and pleasanter idea than they have at present of our barracks and their inmates.

Various reasons induce me to withhold my name. By giving it I should add no weight to the opinions I have expressed, and by withholding it, I have been able to write more freely. It must not be thought that I am ashamed of seeing my name in print, with the titles added of "Private," "Corporal," or "Sergeant"—honourable titles that I worked hard to gain—but if I gave my own name, many others would be involved in my story besides myself, and I should not feel justified in pursuing such a course.

It is, however, right for me to state that I am no longer serving in the profession in which at one time all my hopes were centred, and which I had expected to have followed permanently; for after three years' service as

a commissioned officer, I was forced to retire in consequence of an illness contracted while serving with my regiment abroad.

Should this narrative come to the notice of any of my former comrades, whatever their rank may be, and should they (reading between the lines) recognise the author, I hope they will accept this assurance of the feelings of friendship that I still entertain for them, and of the lively interest that I still take in their welfare, and, indeed, in that of the whole regiment to which both they and I had the honour to belong.

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THROUGH THE RANKS

TO

A COMMISSION.

CHAPTER I.

My reasons for enlisting—Arguments used in favour of, and against, my getting a Commission through the Ranks—Enlistment at Portsmouth—My first entry into a barrack-room—The Soldier's "home" described—Barrack-room discipline.

THE idea of enlisting was first put into my head by one of the most distinguished officers of the English Army, who was commanding the School of Instruction for Auxiliary Forces at Aldershot, which I attended in April 1873, being at the time Lieutenant in a battalion of Volunteers in a western county. At the end of my month's course, the commandant asked me why, with my apparent fondness for soldiering, I did not enter the regular army. The answer was simple—I did wish to do so, but I was

too old. My name had been entered at the War Office for a commission in the Line about four years before, while I was at Oxford; and had I taken my degree within the prescribed limits of age, I should have entered the army in the ordinary manner for University men.

It was in September 1869 that the correspondence with the Horse Guards took place. At that time I was twenty-one years old, and the regulations as to age were:—

Ordinary candidates for Infantry	17 to 20.
„ „ Cavalry	17 to 22.
University men (who must be B.A.)	17 to 23 Infantry.
„ „	17 to 25 Cavalry.
„ „	17 to 28 Colonial Corps.

Thus in 1869 by leaving the University I might have got into the Cavalry by direct commission, but I was strongly advised to stay on at Oxford, and get my degree, and enter the army in that way as a B.A. When I had "put on my gown," however, I had passed the age for any commission, with the exception of one in a West India Regiment, and although fully entitled to that, I could not bring myself to apply for it. However, the distinguished

officer above referred to most kindly took up my case; and, first, he tried if, on a special recommendation from himself as commandant of the school, the authorities would overlook my having passed the right age; but this failed. Passing through the militia would not have succeeded, also owing to age. So, after many talks on the subject with me, and consulting several officers high up in the service, he at first hinted and finally recommended that I should enlist.

The notion was so repugnant to me, when first suggested, that I believe I asserted strongly that I could never do it. It seemed like breaking caste, and doing an injury to myself and belongings. Within four months I had taken the Queen's shilling. During that time I never ceased to think about it, and asked opinions from any one who could guide me. All through my family, the whole subject was freely canvassed; generally, almost universally, the experiment I proposed to make, was condemned. In truth, it was a mere experiment, and the risk was too great to justify any (but a certain small minority) in backing me up. No one had heard of a case quite like mine, and so there were no good grounds on which to form a definite opinion

as to success, or otherwise. But the more I thought about it, the more inclined I felt to take the chance, and, with this certainty before me, that if I could not carry out my project of gaining a commission through the ranks, I should be pretty well cured of the wish to go soldiering, and should take more easily to some other profession.

The chief reasons in favour of my enlisting and ultimate success were:—(*a*) Love of army work. (*b*) Good knowledge of drill, and experience of camp life and manœuvres gained as a volunteer officer. (*c*) Name having been entered at the War Office for a commission. (*d*) General experience of life gained at Oxford. (*e*) All examinations at the University passed (and so qualified educationally for a commission). (*f*) Having (for a young man) quite independent means. (*g*) Not being in any scrape. (*h*) Having had the privilege of a good religious education. These seemed to show that I might expect to get on quickly with the details of my work in the ranks, and as a non-commissioned officer; that I might hope to "keep straight;" and that, when the time came, there would be strong arguments in favour of my being given a commission.

One of the main considerations that had to be taken into account was, the probable time necessary for me to work up through the various grades before I could get my commission. Being twenty-five years old, already, I could not hope for ultimate success in the army, as my profession, unless I could begin my work, as an officer, very soon. Had I gone straight into the army after leaving Oxford, I should have been several years older than my brother officers of the same army standing. However, it seemed worth while to sacrifice even another year or two, for the sake of the experience I should gain by taking the course I now proposed. Had I been delayed long in the ranks, my labour must have been in vain.

Among the various opinions I obtained on this subject, some were that I must wait ten years at least; others held out a hope of five or three years, while one officer affirmed that had *he* the command of a regiment, he would guarantee me a commission in one year. On the whole, I took the favourable view, and was prepared for a banishment of two or three years, at the outside, from family and society. Those friends who told me I must wait ten years were really trying to dissuade me

from enlisting; and, among other arguments, gave me most dreadful accounts of the degrading work I should have to do. In my case this proved quite erroneous; for, in a letter written five weeks after I had enlisted, I said:—"You will not be surprised at a feeling I have of longing to make people, who wrote and talked in this way, feel how much they were in error about my enlisting."

When I had pretty well made up my mind on the subject, I took certain precautions which appeared likely to be useful hereafter. The first thing, and the most important, was to select a regiment, of which the commanding officer would take a favourable view of my proceedings. I did not in the least expect to be pushed on unfairly, to the detriment of other men; but it was evident from the variety of views, taken by the different officers consulted, that some commanding officers would think me deserving of encouragement, and others would take an opposite course. My former adviser came to my help in this also, and finally proposed the —— Regiment, commanded by Colonel ——, C.B., and wrote to him explaining my position, and obtained leave for me to call and introduce myself to my future chief. Knowing him

as I do now, an out-and-out good soldier, I fully appreciate what he told me; and, indeed, at the time, it was just what I wanted. He promised me, if I proved myself to be the best man in any grade, that he would give me the promotion when a vacancy occurred. That I must entirely comply with every regulation, especially as to army school certificates; that he should give me no privilege or freedom in any way different from the rest of the regiment; but when I was qualified for it, he would recommend me for a commission, and that he highly approved of my idea of earning my commission through the ranks; and comforted me by saying he thought I should be all the better officer for it. But he more than once spoke of it as a "great ordeal" to be passed through, although he said he really believed I could do it with good results, and satisfaction to myself. He also promised me that at any time, should I find the life too hard, he would allow me to pay the regulation sum of money, and leave the regiment at once. I also wrote to the War Office on the subject. The answer was a purely official one, thus:—"The promotion of a non-commissioned officer must depend entirely upon his merits, and the reports by his commanding

officer." As far as it went it was satisfactory enough, especially as I knew that I had the good wishes and support of my future Colonel.

There was one other lucky coincidence, viz.—some articles published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* just about this time, which gave a detailed account of the writer's experiences on enlisting; of what he had to go through, and giving various useful hints as to settling into barracks; chiefly as to the general comfort of a recruit on first entering on his new life. For as the regular soldier's kit would not be served out for several days after joining, it was recommended that any one accustomed to such "luxuries"! should take with him a brush, comb, tooth-brush, soap, change of shirt, socks, etc. A soldier would not be allowed to keep in barracks any plain clothes, after he had his uniform served out, but extra underclothing would at all times be useful.

Having been accustomed all my life to rough it a little when necessary in camp and other ways, I only provided myself with the luxuries above mentioned, also a book or two and writing materials, packed into a small portmanteau which I determined to keep with me; not, of course, in barracks, but at some small hotel, and in which I could stow away

my civilian clothes when I had discarded them, and then they would be handy for any emergency. And so on August 26, 1873, I made my start from home, and slept that night at Simpson's Railway Hotel, Portsmouth.

A recruit is saved a great deal of trouble and worry by going straight to the place where the regiment is stationed, and enlisting there as (what is called) a "Headquarter Recruit." Of course the ordinary class of man would not afford the expense of the journey, but would simply go to the nearest recruiting sergeant he knew of; and he would in the course of a few days be sent off to his regiment or depôt, most likely being forwarded with three or four other recruits, some of whom might not be very desirable companions. I had been put up to the inconvenience of this plan, and so made my own way to the headquarters of the Regiment I had selected, being in very good spirits, and only feeling that I should be dreadfully disappointed if I could not carry out my project.

The —th were quartered in the "Anglesea Barracks," and on the morning of the 27th August I made my way there and introduced myself to the sergeant-major as a recruit. He had been prepared

for my coming, I fancy, by the Colonel, and at once produced the necessary papers, took down my answers to various questions, and then conducted me to the orderly room, where the Colonel was sitting, in order that he might approve of my being enlisted. I enlisted for "short service," *i.e.* six years with the colours, and another six years in army reserve. The only alternative was twelve years with the colours.

A recruit has to answer the following questions:—

1. Name?
2. Parish and county of birth?
3. Age?
4. Trade or calling?
5. Are you apprentice?
6. Married?
7. In militia, or army, or reserve?
8. Ever served in army, navy, etc.?
9. Ever been rejected as unfit for service?
10. Have you been marked "D" or "BC"?

11, 12, 13, 14, 15. Questions about willingness to serve, etc., and being satisfied with enlistment.

16. Willing to serve for twelve months extra if abroad, or if during a war when the regular twelve years is up?

17. During term of service in reserve may be

called on to join any regiment of infantry in imminent national danger or great emergency?

These formalities completed, the sergeant-major handed to me and I accepted "The Queen's Shilling." Afterwards I had a private interview with the Colonel. He said he had thought over everything that could, in any way, conduce to my comfort, and meant to soften matters for me as long as it was not to the detriment of the other men. I then had to be approved by the medical officer, and was taken to the hospital for that purpose. I was immediately ordered by the corporal to strip to the skin, "and take *that* off too if you can," he added. I was saved the annoyance, however, of having to stand about naked before a lot of other men, by the Colonel fulfilling his promise just made. He had written a few lines to the doctor, and in consequence I was shown into a room by myself to be examined. I thoroughly satisfied him. The "eye-test" was rather severe, having to count white dots on black paper right across a large room, each eye alternately being covered. Having passed the doctor, I had nothing more to do that day. I could not be sworn in (or attested) until twenty-four hours after being enlisted —a rule made, I believe, to prevent recruiting ser-

geants getting hold of men unfairly, and to give the youthful adventurer an opportunity of thinking over the step he has taken. Of course there is a possibility that he may take himself off, but a notice is given to every recruit, at the time of his enlistment, informing him that if he does not come back for the purpose of being taken before a Justice, either to be attested or to release himself of his engagement, he will be liable to be punished "as a rogue and vagabond." For a man can change his mind after receiving the shilling, and escape the service by paying £1, called "smart money," before being attested. After that he is actually bound for the term of his engagement, and cannot leave without a proper discharge, obtaining permission from his commanding officer, and paying down a sum of money varying according to the length of his service, but never exceeding £20.

The night between my being enlisted and attested I spent at the hotel; the next day, August 28, I was duly sworn in, and affixed my signature to the declaration of allegiance to Her Most Gracious Majesty. The oath taken by recruits on attestation is as follows:—"I do make oath that I will be faithful, and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty,

her heirs and successors, and that I will, as in duty bound, honestly and faithfully defend Her Majesty, her heirs and successors, in person, crown, and dignity, against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of Her Majesty, her heirs and successors, and of the generals and officers set over me." I had some dinner that day with the sergeant-major, and afterwards he showed me the door of my barrack-room, my future home, and, without coming in himself, left me to go in and introduce myself to my "comrades." It was quite a little pang parting with the sergeant-major. He had been very civil to me during our twenty-four hours' acquaintance; and, among other things, offered both to give me private instruction in rifle drill, etc., and also invited me to sit in his room, and to keep books or spare clothes there. I often availed myself of the quiet of his room in the evening, especially at first, and in return I used to teach his boy "arithmetic!" I suppose the sergeant-major thought it would be diplomatic to be civil to the Colonel's protégé; but he was a very good friend to me all through my service, and never seemed the least to object to (what he must have known), viz., that some day I should be promoted over his head.

But to return to the door of the barrack-room, where the sergeant-major had left me. I put on a cheerful face, and walking in found what was for barracks quite a scene of confusion. It was the day of "refilling the mattresses," and a very disagreeable day it is generally voted to be. Soldiers' bedding is all changed periodically, and on this day clean straw had been served out. The usual programme on these occasions is as follows:—Each soldier carries his mattress and bolster to some appointed place, and there rips open one side or end, to empty out the old straw which has probably become, by frequent lying on, small and soft. Later on in the day, when perhaps clean cases have been served out, the men are turned into a yard, where the fresh straw has been placed, and there they fill their mattresses and bolsters (a very amusing scene sometimes), the "old hands" taking care to put in plenty of straw, more, in fact, than is at all comfortable for the first few nights, for they know well that it will rapidly diminish in bulk. Then away to the barrack-rooms, where needles and thread are produced, the mattress-cases neatly sewn up, and a good deal of kneading and beating into shape ensues to make the beds as comfortable as may be for the first night.

This was what all the men were busy about when I made my appearance. Of course there was a lull immediately, and never was I more glad of being a smoker! I walked up to a spare bench, sat down and lit a pipe, and at once began talking about the work in hand. In two or three minutes I was hard at it with needle and thread, and the older soldiers, explaining matters, and giving me various useful hints, especially about folding the mattresses and stowing away the bedding, etc., and what was not very comforting just then, added that newly filled beds were very disagreeable to sleep on. The room I was to occupy was on the ground floor, very lofty and well ventilated, three large windows and a good fireplace. Barrack-rooms are all furnished much alike; and I may as well describe them at once, to show what my new home was like. The walls were whitewashed, and the floor bare boards; there were tables in the centre, sufficient for all the occupants of the room to sit down to at once, and wooden forms to correspond. Generally a hanging shelf over the table, on which are kept all the plates and basins, one of each being provided for each man in the room. The iron bedsteads are arranged all round, the heads against the wall, and they are made

in two parts, so that during the day one half can be run in or closed up under the other, thus giving much more free space to move about in. The mattress is rolled up, pillow inside, and kept fastened with a strap, the two blankets and two sheets folded up very neatly, and placed on the top of the rolled mattress, which is stood against the head of the bed, occupying about half of the bedstead when closed up. The remaining half (on which the rug or counterpane is laid) serves for the men to sit on. As a rule there is a space of about three or four feet between the bedsteads, and a man next a window is generally best off.

All round the rooms, over the heads of the beds, are iron shelves, and hooks just below, each man having that part of the shelves immediately over his own cot. All the soldiers' worldly possessions are kept on these shelves, and have to be arranged with scrupulous tidiness. The knapsack and other accoutrements are put on the hooks, and the rifle generally stands in a little place made for it close to the head of the bed. Very often if a man has near his cot a piece of spare wall he will hang up pictures or photographs, which gives the room a more comfortable appearance, and, provided it is done tidily, it

is never objected to. The other articles of common property in the room are a hair broom, mop, long-handled scrubber (for cleaning the wood floors), a hand scrubbing brush (for cleaning tables and forms), two tin dishes, on which the dinner is brought in, two tin pails, two wooden buckets, and a big iron coal box, also two coal trays, *i.e.* square wooden boxes used for carrying coal about in, but generally kept in the room for throwing any litter into. The neatness of the room depends chiefly upon the sergeant in charge. If he is a good man he is most strict in enforcing the old rule, "A place for everything and everything in its place;" and the men soon get to learn that this is really for their own comfort. The men also pride themselves in keeping things clean and bright, especially if they ever get praised by the officers inspecting the rooms. The tables are often quite beautifully white; and, without plenty of hand-scrubbing they soon get a very different colour; for all the meals take place on them without tablecloths, and ink may be spilt, etc., or they may be soiled in many ways. As a rule the men keep one side of the table extra clean. To explain this I ought to say that the regulation barrack-room table is made in 6-foot lengths, each length

being supported by and merely resting on two iron trestles; so that the tables can be used with either side uppermost, or can be taken off the trestles and stood against the wall, which would be done always when the floor was swept or washed. The "extra clean" side of the table would only be seen on special occasions, such as the officer's visit to the room, and kit inspections, etc. At all meals the side least clean would certainly be used. The tin dishes and cans also get their full share of rubbing, until they quite shine again. After the officer's visit you may often hear such remarks as, "He do like to see them cans bright;" or, "What's the good of scrubbing the tables when he takes no notice?" etc. It is a common occurrence, also, for the officer's character to be taken into account *before* his visit. "Captain A. is coming round. He never says anything;" or, "Best not leave your shelf like that; Captain B. will be here directly, and he will see it before he comes into the room. He *has* got an eye, he has." And barrack-room discipline, a most important point, is entirely dependent upon the fact of the officers and sergeants working together. If either of them are careless or remiss, discipline suffers in proportion. The officer, however strict,

cannot see to the details of barrack-room life himself; he must trust his non-commissioned officer; and for a good, painstaking sergeant to be unsupported by his own officers is quite heart-breaking.

When I joined in August 1873, the regiment, although very weak in numbers, had plenty of good "old soldiers;" and these men were a great help in maintaining discipline. They knew what was expected of them in the barrack-room, and they did it; and the sergeants had not half the trouble they have now with the lot of boys that chiefly compose a regiment. However, I was decidedly fortunate in my companions, seventeen altogether in the room. The colonel had sent me to the company commanded by his best captain, and the captain had put me in his best room. There were some very quaint characters—quiet old soldiers of the old school; more than one Crimean veteran. Had I joined two years later, I should never have known what the "long service" man was like. But these men seemed to enjoy helping me, and putting me in the right way of doing things. Very often, quite unasked, some one would come up to me and do for me what I was vainly trying to do for myself. I had been prepared for very different behaviour on

the part of the "coarse British soldier;" but quite at the beginning of my time I described the treatment I received as "not only kind, but respectful." I believe the fact is, that all Englishmen, and none quicker than soldiers, immediately find out and appreciate a gentleman. Another thing that both surprised and pleased me was being left to myself. I mean not being talked to or bothered in any way; and that I found out to be a general custom—any man who liked to be quiet and keep to himself was quite able to do so; and he might sit on his cot all day, and no one take any notice of him, provided he did his share of the general work. During the short time I was a "private" I had many quiet hours every day, during which I could read or write quite undisturbed. Of course there were exceptions to this, chiefly towards bed-time, when the men began coming in from their evening walks. Then often they were very noisy and talkative, occasionally quarrelsome; but, as a rule, from about 5 or 5.30 until 8.30, the room was quite quiet and often deserted. If there were any occupants, they were men like myself, reading or writing, or cleaning up their kit, etc., ready for going on guard next day.

CHAPTER II.

Soldier's kit described—The "greatcoat" nuisance—Daily routine of barrack life—Rations and soldiers' food described—A dinner—Washing arrangements—Bathing parades—The "Orderly man" and his duties—Cooks.

THERE was nothing very eventful in my work at first. I had three or four drills every day, going through the regular course for recruits, and which I had passed in very well, four months before, at Aldershot; both as doing myself and instructing others. We had a small squad of recruits, only six or eight, and they had been drilled for three weeks before I joined; so they did not keep me back much. But, as a rule, a man is pushed on as fast as he can learn, being transferred from one squad or class to the next above directly he is fit for it. The sooner he can take his place in the ranks the better for every one. Until he has passed his recruits' drill he does no guard duty nor fatigue work, but is kept steady at squad drill, etc., school, and gymnasium. When he

gets his kit served out, which is not for several days after joining, he has to spend a lot of time learning how to clean it. My kit was delayed a long while; I was eight days without it, and great was my disgust at having to do drills, etc., in my ordinary clothes; and it was lucky I had taken the hints in the *Pall Mall Gazette* about providing myself with a few extras. The reason for my having to wait so long, was that the new system of enlisting men for brigades, instead of battalions, was just being started. In reality, I had enlisted for the —th Brigade, which comprised two battalions. The headquarter of the brigade was in a midland county, and before my kit could be served out to me they had to write from Portsmouth to the Depôt to find out what "number" of the —th Brigade was to be assigned to me. Nothing is served out to a soldier from the stores until it is marked with the proper number; and it was about the 5th of September that I first got into my uniform, and was supplied with the various articles (gratis), called "necessaries" all duly marked with my official number, viz. "—th Brigade, 8." The kit is given to the soldier free of expense at first; but he must keep it up in a proper state of effi-

ciency for himself, with the exception of the cloth clothes and boots, and certain articles of equipment, which latter never really are his private property at all, viz. rifle, knapsack, waist-belts, etc., gaiters, greatcoat, and chako. If these are damaged or worn out before the proper time, the soldier will have to pay for them, otherwise they are no expense. In 1873 the regulation about cloth clothes was three pairs of trousers in two years (one pair every year, and an extra pair alternate years), and the tunics—a cloth tunic every two years, and a serge tunic every year. If these are not kept tidy and clean a man will be ordered to buy new ones, but if careful he need never have this expense; especially if he will at first get from some soldier an old coat, in which to do fatigue work or other dirty jobs. A recruit can always pick up some such "slops" for a shilling or two. The rest of the "necessaries" are (in addition, *i.e.*, to the two pairs of boots and cloth clothes and articles of equipment mentioned above), two coarse flannel shirts, three pairs of thick socks, a pair of braces, a pair of worsted gloves, glengarry cap, comb, razor and shaving-brush, knife, fork, spoon, a brass button stick and polishing-brush (used for cleaning buttons, badges, etc.), box of blacking, two

boot brushes, a clothes brush, a small sponge for use with pipeclay, and a Bible and Prayer-Book. The Prayer-Book has a copy of Hymns Ancient and Modern with it. There is also supplied to each soldier a tin canteen, which is carried on the knapsack, and on service is used for eating or drinking out of, and the top or lid is fitted with a folding handle, so that it can be used for cooking purposes. Also, now, soldiers get a rough canvas bag, which is very convenient for stowing away all the brushes, etc., used for cleaning purposes, and for taking away things in when a man goes on leave or furlough.

Some parts of the kit are not at all easy to clean and keep bright, especially the black pouches for ammunition. I never was able to do my own properly, and when they wanted polishing I always gave some old soldier a few pence to do them for me. Most regiments have white pouches, which are cleaned in a minute or two with pipeclay, and it is a decided hardship (in a small way) that some men should have to spend so much more time in polishing up these black pouches. Most of the other things are easily learnt by any one who takes the trouble; in fact, in the three or four months that recruits are kept "at drill," they have plenty of

time to get all their kit into good order. And for a man to look dirty on parade is mere carelessness.

I was very much surprised on first joining to see how much cleaning and polishing and pipeclay, etc., was necessary. Men seemed always at it. They did not seem to mind doing it; and I fancy it is a very good thing that they have some useful occupations, for a private soldier has plenty of spare time. The word they apply to this part of their life shows what they think of it, for they always call it "soldiering." On a wet afternoon, or when a man has nothing else to do, he will light a pipe, sit down on his cot, and give out to his comrades that he means "to do some soldiering." I always did my own "soldiering" at first; in fact, I determined that I would do everything for myself until I was promoted sergeant, and I stuck to it. While I was a recruit or full private it was easy enough, but as a lance-corporal or corporal it came very hard sometimes, as I had hardly any spare time. It is a recognised thing that all sergeants should pay a man (called bâtman) to look after their things, and a sergeant expects to find everything clean and ready to put on whenever he wants it. Before leaving this subject, I must mention a thing that caused, and I suppose still

causes, a great deal of grumbling, viz. the regulation about the method of folding and carrying "great-coats." In favour of the system there is this to be said, that they look uncommonly well on parade; that they are easily carried, and leave the soldier full use of his arms. By "easily," I mean that they are folded so compactly that they don't get in the way at all; they occupy very little space; but they are far from "easy," as implying "comfort" in carrying. On the other hand, the objections are great. The dislike shown by the men is due entirely to the difficulty of folding the coats properly, and the length of time it takes. From twenty minutes to half-an-hour is quite a moderate estimate. This may be explained by the fact that the coats must be folded quite exactly to a certain size and shape. Half an inch out would probably entail on the offender an extra hour's drill. When on the soldier's back, the coat looks like a perfectly smooth, hard, oblong, 15 inches one way, 10½ the other, the corners quite square or rectangular, and, to borrow from Euclid, the "opposite sides equal and parallel."

To enable soldiers to do this, in every barrack-room a stick is kept, marked the exact size for the coat to be when folded (15 by 10½ inches). A

similarly marked stick is also produced on parade very often, by which the coats can be tested. There was a standing order in my regiment that at "guard mounting" the orderly sergeants should all have "coat sticks" in their hands. To get a big coat, with high collar, round cape, and long sleeves, into this exact form, with the necessary mathematical precision, is no easy task. I did accomplish it after a bit, and was very pleased with myself for the same; but it did seem absurd that anything so essentially "made to be used" as a greatcoat in England, should have all this bother and trouble bestowed on it. The consequence was that when a man had made a "good fold," he did not unfold it again in a hurry, and would much prefer to get wet or cold. To prove this — when on guard, the men would try their best to be allowed to go through the night without being ordered to put on their coats; and if the guard-room was near barracks, it was an invariable rule that "loose coats" (*i.e.* unfolded) should be sent across to the men. Very often a well-folded coat would be passed on from one man to another as it came his turn to go on guard. Hence also the custom (not always carried out) that defaulters after each drill should undo their coats;

so that they might have the trouble of folding them again. Another serious objection is that the coats are worn out much quicker by this system of folding. To get them really neat, soldiers wet them before commencing operations, and fold them up while damp; of course, very bad for the cloth. Then they have to be pulled, and beaten, and pressed, and, to keep them in shape, are fastened down with two or three enormous pins, which gradually wear away the bottom of the coat altogether. I have heard an order given that "no pins were to be used;" but no folded coat could look well on parade without being fastened down with something. I believe the plan pursued at present is thoroughly unpractical, although in appearance most excellent.[1] It is also a very uncomfortable way of carrying the coats, as the hard lump comes just on the shoulder-blades. The knapsack hangs below in the small of the back, and is very well adapted, and carried without any difficulty. There is, curiously, an opinion among soldiers, that it is easier to carry the knapsack *and* greatcoat than to carry the coat by itself. When by itself it seems

[1] The new pattern coats, with cape made separate, are an improvement, being much easier to fold.

to balance badly, and pull back on the shoulders, especially if at drill or manœuvres, when there is much running to be done. From my own experience, I should prefer wearing *the whole* equipment for any short periods of time; but when it comes to long marches, and being ten or twelve hours under weigh, I would rather incur the extra discomfort or pain on my shoulders of the coat alone, and escape the additional weight of the knapsack.

My days were very regular at first as regards work. The routine of a private soldier's day is not broken as much as a non-commissioned officer's, because the duties are less variable. On September 1st I thus described my hours :—Turn out of bed at 6, and, after a short wash and making up bed, parade, 6.30-7.30; breakfast at 7.45; then sit round table and peel potatoes, etc., for dinner; time for general polishing up of person and clothes; parade, 9.30—for an hour; and for recruits another parade about 11.30; dinner, 12.45; parade, 2.30; tea, 4.30; then a free time until 9.30, when the roll of each company is called, the orders for next day read out, men warned for any special duty (such as guard), and to bed, and "lights out," at 10.15. Besides

these hours of drill, recruits must go to school, until they can pass an examination in reading, writing, and the four simple rules of arithmetic. I once went to school, and was then excused further attendance, as it appeared that I was able to pass the necessary examination!

The food supplied to soldiers rather surprised me at first by its goodness. For breakfast, as much bread and coffee as could be desired; for dinner, a good stew or baked meat, with plenty of potatoes, etc.; and for the evening meal, bread and tea. The quality of everything was excellent; and it was only the meat that appeared to me deficient in quantity. Every soldier is supplied daily with a free ration of bread and meat, viz. ¾ lb. of beef or mutton, reckoned before cooking, and with bone, and 1 lb. of bread, which is made in the army bakeries, and is always of excellent quality, and quite fresh when served out. This "free ration" is served out in loaves of 4 lbs. each, so that generally four men eat together from one loaf, or otherwise the loaf is divided in the barrack-room; and the meat is issued in joints, as far as possible, according to the number of men in each room. Thus, with sixteen men in a room (or "in mess," as it is called),

their share of meat would be given them in a joint of about 12 lbs. They would get the exact weight, but would be lucky if it was all in one piece. Generally it would be one large piece, and the rest scraps. Besides this free ration, soldiers have to spend 2½d. or 3d. a day of their pay in buying what are termed "groceries." Some men escape this stoppage of pay, and of course are not then entitled to any share in the groceries. The "cooks," and the men who wait in the sergeants' mess and canteen, also the officers' mess waiters and other men, are always put "out of the groceries," as they do not get their meals in the barrack-room. But the cooks, though not paying for groceries, take their share of coffee before leaving the cook-house. Men never see this part of their pay, as it is stopped from them, and given to the contractor for groceries through the pay-sergeant and quartermaster. Comprised under the head of groceries are coffee, tea, sugar, milk, ½ lb. of ordinary baker's bread per man, called "tea-bread," potatoes, a few other vegetables, salt, pepper, mustard, flour, pearl barley (used for soup), and sometimes curry powder, according to the skill of the corporal whose duty it might be to order the groceries for his company. Taking into

consideration the class from which our soldiers chiefly come, no one can hesitate to say that they are decidedly well cared for as regards their food. The young recruits generally eat all they can get hold of; but the older men don't really want as much as they can get. I have often seen large quantities of bread actually thrown away and wasted; and on the days when there was soup for dinner the meat was often left. Besides what has been mentioned above, most men (unless under any stoppage of pay for any misdemeanour) provided themselves with butter, brawn, or sausage, or something equivalent from the canteen, and besides this universal shop, they often had opportunities of buying hot "messes" of stewed meat, from a man allowed by the commanding officer to bring his concoctions into barracks; but as I had ideas that it was the refuse of the soldiers' food, reproduced in a new form, I always abstained from that indulgence. These additions to the regulation rations were made chiefly for breakfast and sometimes for tea, but the 4·15 meal is not thought much of in barracks, and men would almost as soon go without it altogether. Whatever a man leaves of his dinner or bread, he puts away on the shelf, sticking his fork into it

so that he may recognise it again, and reserves it for another time, the most usual custom being to eat it just before going to bed, after the evening walk. There was a great comfort about which our Colonel was very particular, viz. to supply men going off early in the morning to any duty with a cup, or rather basin, of coffee. If we had a specially early parade, every one could get some. This was not taken out of the regular supply, but given extra, and paid for out of the canteen funds.

Soldiers have a curious habit of never drinking anything at dinner. They often get a pint of beer before dinner, and all except the abstainers pay a visit to the canteen directly afterwards; but they apparently have no wish to drink until the eating part of the business is all over. The usual routine of dinner and the ceremony of laying the table and carving is something as follows:—A few minutes before dinner time the orderly man (whose other duties I shall explain presently) lays out at one end of the table, all close together, as many plates and basins as there are men in "mess." The basins are only required on soup days; but we will suppose this to be one. As soon as the first dinner bugle sounds, the orderly man takes

to the cook-house one of the tin dishes and cans (which I mentioned before), and gets the meat which had been served out for his mess in the morning, and the proper proportion of soup which had been made for the whole company. Having carried this to the barrack-room, two or three soldiers go to the assistance of the orderly man, and the soup is poured out into the several basins, as equally as possible, and the meat cut up into small pieces (not slices!) and partitioned out on to the plates, then the potatoes the same. When there is a large bone as part of the ration, some meat is left on it, and it is put on one of the plates for any one to take who likes such pickings. As soon as the whole dinner has been thus divided to the general satisfaction, the men each take up a plate and basin according to their fancy, and set to work. Mustard and pepper pots are provided, but the salt is generally used from the lump. The lids of the canteens are often put on the table for putting scraps into, etc., and it saves the table from grease; an important precaution when it is remembered how clean it has to be kept. As may be imagined, there are plenty of scraps of "broken meat" after dinner, potatoes, bread, and bones; these are collected by the orderly

man and taken away when he washes up. The refuse of the food of the whole regiment, which comes to a considerable amount each day, is sold to a man who contracts for it; and the money obtained from this source is divided once a month among the various companies. As far as I remember, it came to about 5s. or 10s. each company; which is sometimes saved up with a view to help the Christmas dinner; but generally spent in buying nets for cooking, and providing smocks for the cooks' wear. At breakfast and tea the same routine is carried out as regards the coffee, etc., the "orderly man" being responsible that the right number of shares are made out; and if any one is absent at the regular meal time, the orderly man has to see that the dinner or coffee is put on one side, and kept for him.

In some regiments it is the custom that the officer on duty for the day goes round the barracks at every meal, to see that the men are all present, and that there are no complaints about the food. But in my regiment it was customary for the captain and sub. of the day to visit the barracks at dinner-time only. The captain went round one half of the companies, the sub. took the other,

each accompanied by a sergeant, who opened the door of each room in turn, and called out "Attention." On hearing this, the men at dinner had to lay down their knives and forks and stop talking; but were not obliged to stand up, as is the regulation in many regiments. The officer expected to see the room perfectly tidy, the men with coats on and hair brushed, and he would have made a great fuss if any soldier had been seen eating his dinner away from the table. He then asked the men if they had any complaints to make; and received the report of the sergeant, as to whether the men were "all present." Only those were reported absent who were absent "without leave" or whose absence could not be accounted for. If any man made a complaint, the officer had to investigate it; but it was usually only some trivial matter about the potatoes being hard, or the meat undercooked. To show how soldiers notice small things, I may add that it was very often the case that the sergeant left the room before the officer, and that the officer left the door open, which necessitated some man getting up from his dinner with sounds very unlike a blessing on his lips; but if the officer did close the door after him, he was invariably

rewarded by the soldiers' highest praise,—"Ah, he's a gentleman." I must not leave the impression on this subject of soldiers' food that I was personally satisfied with what I got in the regular course of things. During the first week I wrote, "I am sorry to say I have not got used to the food. I do not find the meat supply enough; it only comes to about twelve mouthfuls a day, which is of course a great change to me, and I have had only one glass of beer, and no wine or spirits, since I came. There is plenty to eat, and it is decidedly good, but I suppose people of our class eat a great deal more meat than the lower classes, and it is the change of diet that I feel. Our food consists almost entirely of bread and potatoes." For the first few days I lived entirely on what was served out to me, but afterwards I used generally to get some supper in the town. Of course I was often on some duty that prevented me leaving the barracks, but otherwise I made a point of paying a visit to a small temperance eating-house, and indulged in cocoa, bread and butter, and eggs or meat. I could not at first discover a convenient place to get my supper. I did not like going into a large hotel, and at the small inns there was a difficuly in getting meat, and also I

should have had to face a lot of other soldiers, whom I always tried to avoid in their evening rambles. But the temperance house suited me most excellently, and, if I felt inclined, I could send the waiter out for beer or porter. However, I generally chose cocoa, and found it really did me more good than anything else.

There was another comfort I allowed myself *outside* barracks, "when necessary,"—viz. hot baths. In all towns, I believe, there are public baths of some sort, and those I went to were perfectly satisfactory. I say I patronised them "when necessary," because, as a rule, I could get plenty of water and washing of all sorts, in barracks. Where the —th were quartered when I joined (the Anglesea Barracks), the arrangements were very good. A large room at the back of the barracks, called the "Ablution Room," fitted up with stone slabs all round, and also down the middle, at which I suppose fifty men could stand and wash at the same time. Large tin basins were supplied in quite sufficient quantity, and water pipes running all round, just above the stone slabs, with taps at intervals, and almost always a good supply of water. Besides this "Ablution Room," there was a bath-house with four or six

baths, in which a man could lie at almost full length. Cold water was laid on as a permanency, and in the winter, hot water also, so that, as a matter of fact, I could get a first-rate bath whenever I wished. The chief difficulty was to find time, and, in the morning, it was almost impossible. About the best chance was when I was just come off guard, for all hands are supposed to have two hours free of duty, after doing the twenty-four hours' guard work. (However, this kind provision cannot be carried out, for a certainty, in the case of non-commissioned officers.) The majority of soldiers do not care much about taking a regular bath. They will indulge in one now and again; but are, for the most part, content with the "Ablution Room." Water and basins, and small wooden tubs are supplied, and there are strict regulations as to the amount of washing that is to take place. The basins are to be used only for face, neck, and shoulders, etc., hands and arms; the tubs being provided for washing the lower extremities. Each man takes with him his soap, towel, or whatever he wants; and never shall I forget my surprise and delight at seeing, on my first visit, a man using a tooth-brush! It put me at my ease at once, but

I soon found that numbers of men did the same, and that, in *that* as in many other things, I had inwardly maligned the British soldier. The usual times for soldiers visiting the Ablution Room are—On first getting up in the morning, for a short wash; between breakfast and 10 A.M. parade, for a more elaborate performance; between dinner and 2 P.M. parade; and again before going out for the evening amusement. There is no doubt that soldiers acquire by their barrack life very cleanly habits, and not unfrequently, in the case of a fresh joined recruit who will not keep himself clean, the other men "notice" him, and get orders from the sergeant of the room, or the colour-sergeant, to take the unclean person into the bath-house, and there subject him to a downright good scrubbing with the hard brushes used for washing the tables. In the summer there are also bathing parades about twice a week. As a rule, I think the men enjoy it, but there are generally some shirkers, and the sergeants have to keep a pretty sharp look-out to see that all their men do go into the water. The favourite dodge of the shirker is to be rather slow undressing, waiting about until some who have bathed come out; and then to begin violently rubbing himself with his towel,

as if drying himself. Whenever I have seen such games going on, I have found it answer well to tell two or three men to take the offender into the water and duck him; a hint is quite enough, as the others enjoy the joke, especially in the case of a recruit, and the sergeant or officer in charge need not appear to notice what is going on. At the bathing parades there are several precautions taken to avoid accidents. No one is allowed to go more than fifty yards from the shore, though this rule is continually broken. Then there is always a "Hospital Orderly," or some one of the sort, present. Also five or six soldiers known to be good swimmers, and called "bathing picket," are kept together to give assistance to any one requiring it. All orders are given by bugle call. When "the halt" sounds, the men begin to undress and get into the water as quick as they can. The "retire" is the signal for leaving the water, and "the dress" soon follows; which does not really mean "put on your clothes," but shows that there are ten minutes left before the parade will be formed up, ready to march home. It seems to me that the old proverb is not quite literally carried out in the army, and that "cleanliness," even if not actually put in front, comes at least equal with the "godliness" it is supposed to follow.

I have said before that the barrack-rooms, etc., have to be kept quite clean and tidy. Every man is supposed to look after that part of the room immediately round his own bed, *i.e.* his own share of the shelves, and the floor by his cot, etc. But the general care of the room is entrusted to each man in turn, whose duties I will roughly describe. This work is taken in regular rotation by all the private soldiers using the room for sleeping. If a man is on guard, or employed away for the day, he misses his turn, and it passes on to the next. That all may know how the turns are going round, a list (or roster) is hung up in every barrack-room, and as each man does his turn the date is marked in the column opposite his name. This is the duty I have mentioned before of "orderly man," and it lasts for twenty-four hours. The first thing the orderly man has to do in the morning is to open all the windows, and, in the winter, to light the fire. He escapes the early parade; as, while the others are out, he has to sweep the room, arrange the tables and forms, and tidy up generally. Probably about 7 o'clock the bugle will sound for "rations," and he then goes to the stores to receive the bread and meat for his "mess," which he brings back to the

barrack-room. He is in reality responsible that he has the right amount given him, although the orderly corporal of the company is at the stores also. The bread is, of course, left in the room, but the meat is taken to the cook-house; but before going there the orderly man has to cut off a share of meat for any member of his mess that may be on guard, as it is generally (but *not* universally) the custom for the men on guard to cook their own meals. The meat is taken to the cook-house in a net, which is marked in some way, so that it may be distinguished from the various other "messes." The nets are usually marked by a little bit of wood tied on to each, and the wood is cut "A. 1,"—"A. 2," etc., meaning A company, No. 1 or No. 2 mess. If it were not for this, one mess might get the meat served out to another, as three or four messes have to share the same oven or boiler. Our orderly man having seen to this, now prepares for breakfast, laying out basins, etc. When the bugle sounds, he fetches the coffee from the kitchen and distributes it equally into the basins. Breakfast over, he gets hot water from the cook-house, washes up the basins, scrubs the tables, and sweeps up any crumbs or litter. While he is doing this, all hands

get to work and peel the potatoes, etc., which are put into a net, the same way as the meat, and taken to the kitchen. The orderly man's next duty is at dinner-time, which I have mentioned before; after dinner he washes up, etc., as after breakfast; and this being considered rather a long job, he is always excused the afternoon parade. At tea, the same duties recur again; but before tea-time the bugle will sound for "groceries." The orderly man attends at the stores, and gets the tea, bread, and vegetables, etc., for his mess; the vegetables, of course, being for to-morrow's use. His duties now are nearly over. Some time during the evening he ought to bring in some fresh drinking water, a can of which is always kept in the room, and a "good old soldier" would probably prepare the sticks for lighting the fire next morning. When the bugle blows "lights out," he turns off the gas, and should get into his cot, feeling sure that he has done his turn of "orderly man" to his own and everbody's satisfaction.

I must here in honesty state that I shirked my turn when it came round; it was the only part of a soldier's life in barracks that I did not go through regularly; and I suppose I have at differ-

ent times done all the orderly man's work; but when my turn came, I gave some soldier 6d. to take it for me, and he was glad to do it; as, besides getting my 6d., he escaped two parades. But I must allow that I did not like washing up and cleaning for all the other inmates of my room; although, many times in camp and in a shooting hut, I have done just the same things for myself and my gentleman friends. As I have said, only the "private soldiers" do orderly man's duty. Recruits are generally excused, as they must go to drill; and so it happened that my turn only came twice, as I was made lance-corporal after about two weeks as full private. Neither was I peculiar in paying another to take my turn, as any private, if employed out of barracks all day (as many good workmen are, as masons, carpenters, etc.), and earning extra pay, would think it worth while to give 6d. rather than be absent from his work. But his name would be kept on the roster, and if he could not get any one to do orderly man for him he would have to do it himself.

I may as well add here the method of drawing the "rations," and how the various messes get their proper quantity. Every morning the colour-ser-

geant of the company sends to the quartermaster an exact detail of the number of men in each mess, and of the wives and children of the soldiers "married with leave," who get a regular ration also, but smaller than the men. Married men and families generally draw their rations every second or third day, so as to get a better piece of meat; but it appears on the ration return as if they drew them every day. This daily return is necessary, because there are continual changes going on; one day some man may be absent; another day a man may come back from a term of imprisonment, or may suddenly be ordered on duty away from the regiment; and, as every man and every ration has to be accounted for, if the mess has been given one ration too much one day, owing to any unforeseen cause, it will have one ration short the next, and *vice versa*. According to the number the colour-sergeant sends in, the various 1 lbs. of bread, and ¾ lbs. of meat are served out next day. The quarter-master (getting returns from all the colour-sergeants) is enabled to know exactly how many men have to be fed next day, and he sends his requisition for the whole regiment, accordingly, to the "grand district stores." The supply is generally a good bit over

the actual amount required, as there must be some waste in cutting up the meat, and the bread can be kept for next day. There are two butchers as a permanency, who cut up the meat directly it arrives. When ready for serving out, the quartermaster has the bugle sounded, upon which the orderly man of every mess, and the orderly corporal of every company, and the orderly officer of the regiment, repair to the stores, and the quartermaster-sergeant, reading from the returns sent in the day before, calls out the number of the mess and name of company, and the quantity of bread or meat due to it. The butcher then puts the meat on the scales, and the orderly men and corporal on behalf of their messes, and the quartermaster on behalf of Her Majesty's Government, look on, to see that exactly the right amount is issued; the orderly officer being present as judge or referee in case of difference of opinion.

There is one cook to each company. Every private is supposed to take it in turn, so that all may have experience in that important department. The cook remains on duty for a month, and when a skilful "artist" gets into the kitchen he is often retained for an extra month. While thus employed

he escapes all parades, all guards, in fact has no duty but cooking. There are generally two kitchens for the regiment, so four or five men cook together. At the head of the cooks there is a sergeant specially trained at Aldershot for the post, and termed "the Master Cook." Sometimes there is a difficulty about coals. Of course great precautions have to be taken to prevent waste or making away with the fuel served out for the kitchen, but not unfrequently the dinners are badly cooked, and, if investigated, it generally turns out that the coal has run short, although the men protest they have made it go as far as possible. Whether the fault really lies in the supply or in the use made of it, or in the stoves, I can't say; for perhaps it may be unnecessary to state that I never took a turn in the kitchen, in fact I never had a chance of doing it; but any way I should have tried to escape; not but what I should feel quite confident of cooking well enough, at any rate well enough for my own eating; but in those days to go a month without any drill or soldiering was not at all my ambition.

CHAPTER III.

Dismissed from recruit drill—Route-marching—Daily fatigue work—Extra employments of soldiers—Coal-carrying—The evening recreations of soldiers—Pay-days and their consequences—Soldiers' Institutes—Night schools—Soldiers' religion—Teetotallers.

My previous knowledge of drill served me so well, that on September 12th I was "dismissed from recruits' drill," and was passed by the adjutant as ready to take my place in the ranks. It was exactly two weeks since my first appearance on the barrack square, and although that was a wonderfully short time, I have no doubt but that I was really fit for it, for my advantages of course were very great. Three months is the usual time taken to get a raw recruit properly "set up" and able to parade with the regiment. I found the manipulation of the rifle harder than I expected, such absolute precision has to be acquired, and the "time" of each motion of the rifle has to be learnt by heart, so to speak;

every man in the regiment must know, without thinking or watching, the exact time of working, so that every movement of the hand or arm may be done (begun and finished) together. To get into this "beat" requires practice. This rifle exercise was the only part of the drill new to me, "the regulars" having different rifle drill from the volunteers. Certainly I knew quite well what had to be done, but I had never worked it practically. I suppose I got rather tired of recruit squad drill, for I wrote home that I was in high spirits at having finished it, and having been out to a good parade with the whole regiment on Southsea Common, on which occasion I was put right-hand man of my company. At this time I was doing the regular work of the private soldier, but it did not last very long, as I was soon made a lance-corporal. On one occasion soon after I joined, the sergeant-major told me I should be promoted directly I had passed my drill, but I asked to be given a few weeks of private's duty, that I might have experience in everything.

The hours of drill were now different from what I had before, viz. 6.30 A.M. setting-up drill, that is to say, extension motions and running drill; about

twenty minutes of the former and ten minutes of the latter. Old soldiers are excused the running, but this half-hour's work before breakfast is most useful although rather hard. An English soldier is supposed to be able to run a thousand yards without stopping, and to be able to do the bayonet exercise with vigour at the end of it. The second drill was at 10 A.M., lasting an hour on ordinary days; and a third drill or a roll-call at 2 P.M. In wet weather the 10 A.M. parade was changed into a catechism of the men in the barrack-room, questions being asked on all sorts of subjects, *e.g.* outpost duty, skirmishing, interior economy, regulations for the barrack-room, and what punishments are due for the various military offences. This catechism was very useful when conducted properly. Some of the men were wonderfully well up in the subjects. Generally the privates were questioned by one of the officers in a barrack-room, and all the sergeants and corporals were assembled somewhere separately and examined by the adjutant or sergeant-major. Of course there was continual chaff and ridicule about "the catechism;" but for all that it is a practice highly to be recommended. On Saturdays the parades were generally different from other days. Instead

of the usual 6.30 A.M. setting-up drill, the whole of the barrack-rooms were thoroughly scrubbed and washed, the shelves swept, windows cleaned, etc. Then at 10 A.M. the parade was "kit inspection," at which every man had to show his regulation kit that I described as served out to me. The various articles are arranged, according to a prescribed form, on the soldier's bed; and every man, however employed, must lay out his kit for inspection at least once a month. There is usually also on Saturdays the medical inspection, at which the men stand in a row, with their coats off, their shirt sleeves rolled right up, their boots and socks off, and their trousers turned up to the knees. The doctor then walks down the rank and sees that the men are clean, etc. No doubt doctors' eyes are better than those of ordinary persons, but this parade always seemed to me rather a farce—at any rate if one judged it by its name.

Supposing a soldier had his three drills a day, as stated above, at 6.30 A.M., 10 A.M., and 2 P.M., and had nothing else, it was about as easy a day's work as he could wish to have; and private soldiers have frequently that amount of duty, and all the rest of the day free. Counting the time for cleaning

accoutrements, etc., they would have quite an hour before dinner, and from 3 P.M. until bed-time entirely to themselves. A day like that would, of course, be very easy, or, as a soldier would say, "getting a soft time." The frequency of these "soft days" will depend chiefly on the place where the regiment is quartered, and on the number of men in the regiment doing regular duty. For instance, at Gibraltar, a man would have very few such "soft days" as compared with some English garrisons, because the number of guards and sentries to be supplied daily is so much greater there. In fact, at Gibraltar, guard-work is the one essential duty; drill seems to be quite a secondary matter, and indeed *is so;* for often I have known the Colonel wish to have a special instruction parade with a good muster, and it has had to be put off on account of so many men being on guard. Another consideration to be taken into account is, that regiments at home now are very weak, far below their right strength, and many men being employed on duty away from the regiment, it throws all the guard-work on a very small minority. Thus, in reckoning the probable severity, or otherwise, of the soldier's duty, two main points must be considered,—first,

the number of guards in the place where the regiment is quartered; second, whether the regiment is at its full strength. At Portsmouth, in my time, a soldier doing regular duty was on guard about once in five or six days, which implies he would entirely lose one night's rest in every five or six; and, after twenty-four hours' guard, a "soft day" was very acceptable. Changes have been made a good deal lately in the number of sentries; so that, possibly, Portsmouth may be easier in that respect now. At Aldershot, I believe great and beneficial reforms have taken place; and whatever relieves a soldier of guard-work is a real boon.

The hours of parade were not invariably the same. Some days we had a long morning's work, 9 A.M. to 12 or 1 P.M., on Southsea Common, or on the hills; and in the winter there were marches into the country, commonly called "route-marching," about four or five miles out and home again along the highroad,—not very interesting work, and rather tiring.

It would be a difficult job for me to enumerate all the varied employments of a private soldier (whether voluntary or compulsory) in addition to drill and guard. However, I will mention some, and first of all, the

"necessary" extra duty which each man would take in turn, viz. daily fatigue work:—"Passage orderly," a man of each company told off to look after the passages, to wash them in the morning, and keep them clean all day; "pioneer's fatigue," two or three men required to help the pioneers in looking after the barrack-square, back-yards, etc., and keeping the gutters and surface-drains clean: this duty lasts all day. Every day a certain number of men are required for fatigue-work in cleaning up the canteen premises, the school, the recreation-room, the officers' mess, sergeants' mess; in fact, all buildings belonging to the regiment, and occasionally a fatigue-party would be ordered to what may be termed "garrison buildings," *e.g.* the church, or hospital, or gymnasium. Most of these duties would be finished by breakfast-time, in which case the men would attend the 10 A.M. and 2 P.M. parades as usual.

The "voluntary" employment which comes within reach of the private man is also very varied, but this can none of it be obtained for the mere asking, for besides the great advantage which most soldiers think it to escape the regular routine of guard, drill, and small fatigue work, it

always brings with it extra pay. But before a man can get these privileges, he must be a certified good drill, and sometimes there would be a regulation that he must be a "first-class" shot, must possess a school-certificate, and be an average good character, *i.e.* have kept free for a year or so from any military offence. The following may be taken as specimens of the extra regimental duty referred to:—Servants to regimental officers, grooms to ditto; servants, grooms, etc., to the various staff officers, generals, brigade-majors, etc; assistants in the school or gymnasium; regimental tailors, shoemakers, carpenters, hair-cutters; waiters, kitchenmen, etc., in the officers' mess; cook and waiter in sergeants' mess. Then in the employ of the garrison authorities there are men wanted as gardeners, masons, glaziers, and carpenters. For although a good deal of this artificers' work is supposed to be done entirely by the Royal Engineers, their numbers have generally to be supplemented by men from Line regiments; and large numbers of men are wanted occasionally for public works, such as road-making, building batteries, levelling, etc., or loading or discharging cargo from ships. In these public works, where large numbers are required, there is no

qualification necessary; every man is taken that can be got hold of. If the men are kept long, or if the work is especially bad for clothes, they would be given extra pay, otherwise it would be considered the "day's work."

Some of the above employments are well worth having, and if kept for any length of time, should enable the soldier to save a good bit of money, and if more known about generally, should be an inducement to the better classes to enlist. A man employed in any of the above positions would never be detailed for guard or any small fatigue, and would only attend one parade a week at the most. As may be imagined, I never applied for any of these voluntary duties, but for the two weeks that I was a private, I took my turn at the daily fatigues. It came to very little, however, as far as I remember; I only did "passage orderly" twice, and none of the other duties. But I tried my hand at coal-carrying, and should have been very sorry to have missed it, as that was one of the things held out to me as being so dreadful for a gentleman to have to undergo. There had been a coal-carrying parade while I was at recruit's drill, but although I had volunteered to go out to it, I did not do so, as

it would have interfered with my proper work. "Coal-carrying" is always substituted for an ordinary parade, *i.e.* a drilled soldier's parade, most often for that at 2 P.M. It is a great object to get as many men as possible, so all hands except recruits are turned out, officers' servants included. Any old clothes may be worn, and sometimes young soldiers who have not any shabby things in their possession, turn their coats inside out, so that a regiment formed for coal-carrying does not appear at its best. Just before the parade, all the wooden coal-boxes (which I have spoken of before) are collected from the barrack-rooms, married quarters, officers' quarters, etc., probably over 100 altogether, and when the men fall in they carry their boxes with them,—two men to a box. The whole regiment is then formed up in a single line, the leading couple of men with their box close to the coal-stores, and all the others in succession. About ten or twelve men are placed inside the coal-yard, whose duty is to fill the boxes. The carrying men are admitted a few at a time, and either the quartermaster, who is the responsible person, or more likely the quartermaster-sergeant, with a list in his hand of the amount of coal due to the various persons to be supplied, orders off

each lot of boxes to its destination under charge of a non-commissioned officer. Each box holds about as much as one man could carry; for, when going upstairs or through any narrow passage, one man generally puts the box on his shoulder; therefore, it is obvious that when both men are carrying, the labour or fatigue is not excessive; in fact, as I described in a letter, it is merely "child's play." Again, with the exception of the filling the boxes, it is not dirty work. Of course our hands got a little black, but that was no great hardship. A liberal government gives the soldier plenty of water; and I should like to know what person in civil life would object to carry his own coal if he could get it supplied him for nothing. This was quite one of the cases in which I felt I had been misled by my advisers before I enlisted, and if they did not know, they ought not to have spoken as they did. I only hope that every English gentleman has many opportunities, "in field or camp," of doing more disagreeable things than coal-carrying.

The "private men" almost always get their evening to themselves, *i.e.* from about 5 o'clock till bedtime. If they had done their three drills and nothing extra, they would have from 2.30 P.M.

onwards; but in most other cases also, even if they had to spend an hour in "soldiering" after their duty was finished, there would be plenty of time for a pleasant evening. I never got properly behind the scenes in this respect, except by hearing men talk over their occupations when they returned to barracks. A considerable number stayed either in the barrack-room or in the canteen and recreation-room, but certainly the majority went out about the town. Some of these men had friends whom they visited or went walks with, others went to theatres or music-halls, and another and least respectable portion spent their time in various "publics;" the usual plan pursued being to call at one house for a pint of beer, then to move on to another, and then a third or fourth, repeating the process at each. A regular custom on these occasions is that if three or four men are going out together, or meet at any beer shop, one man pays for the drink of the others. When that is finished another man provides an equal amount for the general consumption, and so the turn goes round until each has provided for the whole party. Although this plan perhaps rather agrees with the soldiers' feeling of good fellowship, it is most prejudicial to the chances of sobriety.

The publicans attract soldiers very much by engaging a singer or two, or perhaps a dancer, whose performances are held in the public room, and no charge for admission. I cannot say definitely that they are bad, although the music is of a very rough description; but I know that rows, and sometimes fights, arise in consequence of these gatherings. I never patronised such concerts, neither music nor company were my style. At one time our Colonel started a rival performance at the regimental canteen, but I don't think it really answered. It was very well attended, and kept a great many men in barracks who would have gone out to the publics, but there was a great deal of extra drinking those nights at the canteen.

Pay days are always taken advantage of by the drinking soldier to "enjoy himself," and also by the steadier men for their amusements. And very troublesome these pay days are—the 1st, 8th, 15th, and 22d of each month. I used quite to dread them sometimes, especially as a sergeant, for as sure as possible the barrack-room would be extra noisy those nights, even if no case of actual drunkenness occurred. There were certain men, not very many, happily, who seemed quite unable to get their 5s. or 6s.

pay without spending the greater part of it the first night; and I have always thought that such men should be given their pay *daily*, for they could not go as far wrong with only 9d. or 10d.; and perhaps after a month or two of this system they might be trusted with pay twice a week, and so come back to the usual custom of weekly payments. It was curious to observe how an "old soldier" seemed to retain his discipline even in his cups. Most of them, if they took too much and were left to themselves, would come quietly into barracks and steal to bed, and remain there until morning. If they were bothered by other men they very likely became noisy; but it was not often done, and even the sergeants would leave such soldiers alone, reserving their notice and authority for the troublesome.

The library and recreation-rooms were well patronised in the evening. The library is a good-sized room, where any one could go, by subscribing a very small sum (about 4d. per month) and see most of the London daily papers, various magazines, etc., and make use of the books kept there; or, if preferred, take away a volume to the barrack-room. In some garrisons the choice of books is very good,

and they are changed about from one regiment to another. The recreation-room was adjoining the library. Here all sorts of games were provided—draughts, chess, backgammon, cards, and two or three bagatelle tables. Of course, smoking is allowed, and usually coffee can be bought from the man in charge of the rooms, who also sometimes makes, for the satisfaction of the drummer-boys, "plum-duff" or other luxury. These arrangements are really a great benefit to the whole regiment, but more especially to such men as don't wish to risk the temptations of the streets. A soldier after his day's work (like other people) is anxious for some amusement, and soldiers being always in or near a town, can make sure of it in some way. If they can get it harmlessly, most of them will do so; though in an army like ours, there are and always will be some bad characters who will not be satisfied with the quiet employment of the library and recreation-room. But after all, what soldiers really like, and I think quite naturally, is, after the restraint of the day's duty and discipline, to smarten themselves up, and looking their best, to get outside the barracks. I know I felt that myself, although I had many more resources in the way of reading and

writing than the ordinary run of soldiers. What they want is amusement and society out of barracks; and I don't believe they patronise the public-houses purely for "drink," because they could get any amount of beer or porter at the canteen close by. Those most excellent institutions which are being generally started now in large garrisons, and called "Soldiers' Institutes," appear at first sight to provide exactly the soldier's requirements; and they are a great attraction to every steady-going man, more especially to the teetotallers. But it seems to me that these are not the soldiers requiring any extra inducements to keep straight; but rather that large middle class of young men who are not confirmed in steady habits, and indeed more inclined to follow the bad characters; and I am afraid the "Institutes" are sometimes failures in this respect. Perhaps the rougher soldiers think the buildings too grand, or the rooms too comfortable, for them to feel at home in them; or perhaps there is a feeling of restraint about the regulations; and I am certain the fact of no beer being sold is a great drawback, as is also the religious element, which is generally made a strong point. It appears impossible that men naturally inclined to

spend their evenings in public-houses, with the attendant evils, should suddenly be attracted by an institution so diametrically opposite. I can't help thinking that the only chance of competing with the publics, and of drawing the men away from the low and bad society they must meet there, is to have a sort of garrison soldiers' club, on the same system, and in the same humble style, as the recreation-rooms they are accustomed to in barracks; to have no rooms for prayer meetings, etc., as part of the club, although on Sundays of course a room might be utilised for religious instruction and lecture; and to allow the soldier to get beer there, for I can't imagine why he should not have some for his supper, or during the evening. He must have something between dinner at 1 o'clock and breakfast next day besides his basin of tea; and as it is certain he will get beer somewhere, much better he should get it where some restraint can be imposed on the amount, and where he will escape the lowest class of society.[1] Another hint ought to be taken from the publicans for the club or institute, and singers

[1] I should not have mentioned this "club" idea, except that I know officers, well qualified to judge, have expressed themselves strongly in favour of it.

should be engaged occasionally to give their performances, free of charge as far as soldiers are concerned, these especially to take place on pay days. Soldiers themselves might very often be found to sing quite well enough, and even to give other amusing entertainments.

Before leaving the subject of the "soldier's evening," I ought to mention the voluntary school, which is, in some regiments, very well attended. The regular hours of school attendance are, 11 A.M. to dinner-time, and 3 P.M. to tea-time. All soldiers are obliged to keep these hours daily until they have passed the lowest standard or fourth class. After that the attendance at school is not compulsory; but no private can be promoted corporal until he is in possession of a third class certificate; and before a corporal can be made sergeant he must have a second class certificate. It is chiefly for these that the voluntary class is started; as the time —6 P.M. to 8 P.M. or thereabouts—enables many men to attend who could not during the day. Sometimes there was a pretty good muster, twenty or thirty, I daresay; but as I only attended this class once or twice, just to see what subjects had to be taken up, I cannot speak for certain. There were a few

men in my company who, being very backward, used to work in the barrack-room; and if they could get any one to help them, that was better than going to the voluntary class. I have acted as private tutor to many young soldiers, and they were certainly most grateful for the help I gave them; and, as I said before, the barracks in the evening are really quite quiet, so that they are not at all a bad place for studying.

And this reminds me of another subject, viz. how a soldier can say his private prayers if he is fortunate enough to have been brought up in such habits. For I take it to be impossible, however much moral courage he may have, for any man to say his prayers as he ought while ten or twelve others are talking, singing, quarrelling, and generally making a noise in the same room; and this, if not entirely a true picture, is always partly so, of any barrack-room at bed-time. Perhaps the simplest thing is for me to state briefly what I ultimately found out to be the most profitable plan. Supposing tattoo and roll-call to be at 9.30 P.M. (at which time all men have to be in barracks), experience soon taught me that however quiet the room might be during the evening, it could not be depended upon

after 9 at the latest, and that there would be no more quiet until 10.15, at which time, according to regulations, the lights would be put out, and all noise or talking stopped. So, as it was out of the question to do my evening devotions at what I might call the usual time, I pursued one of two courses, or both, according to circumstances. If I had a chance earlier in the evening of getting the room quite quiet, I always took it to say prayers, and in one place where I was quartered (viz. the forts near Gosport) I used to go out of doors, on the fortifications, and be quite undisturbed. The second course, which I could always make sure of, was to get into bed, wait a few minutes until silence was obtained on the lights being put out, and then to get up again. In the morning there was not the same difficulty, as the "reveille" sounds at least an hour before the first parade, and men don't begin making much move at once, so that there was generally ten minutes quiet, or tolerably so.

Soldiers are wonderfully good in one respect, that they never interfere with one another on such points. A man might make as much religious show as he liked, and if he did not bother his comrades by it, they would not bother him; but, for all this, I am

afraid I must confess that I never actually noticed any man saying prayers, though I am quite of opinion that some did do so. There was one man in particular, who had been in the regiment ten or twelve years when I joined, and was in the same room with me. I have heard soldiers, who had known him all along, say, that when he first joined the service, he was most regular, morning and evening, in his devotions; after a bit, however, he seems to have gone to the bad, and been a most rough character in every way. But when I made his acquaintance he had been brought round again, and this time took the form of a violent out-and-out teetotaller, and he used to lecture us all pretty freely about our danger in using beer, continually quoting to us, with great emphasis, a certain text—"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." I am afraid he did not get many permanent converts; although it is rather surprising to find how many men there are "total abstainers." The man mentioned above was extremely steady and persistent, but numbers are very false to their colours. They take the pledge, or "*a* pledge," and stick to it for about a month, or perhaps six months; then they break out again, prob-

ably drink worse than ever, get into trouble, and most likely after that they take the pledge again. I have also known men belong to a society which demands no pledge, but merely gives a card to each member, which he promises to return before he touches any strong drink. He only engages not to drink any beer or spirits while he has the card in his possession.

Many private soldiers (just as many "private gentlemen" do) hold forth earnestly on the uselessness of total abstinence. I once heard an old veteran laying down the law on the subject, and the moral of his discourse was, that not only abstaining was a folly, but drunkenness might be a virtue; and he founded his statement on the following facts (?). At some place in India, during a prevalence of cholera, all the men sleeping down one side of a room were teetotallers, with one exception; and on a certain occasion this individual went to bed tipsy, and all his comrades of course perfectly sober. During the night the cholera swept down on the room (or at least on the side in question), and in the morning all the sober men were seized, and the drunkard alone escaped! I suppose the narrator was sleeping on the other side, and knew all about

the cholera coming along that part of the room where there were so many foolish abstainers, because he was "virtuously" the worse for liquor; but virtually the better for it!

I did not spend my evenings (as a rule) according to any of the methods described as in vogue by the privates. What I wanted was not "society and amusement" from a soldier's point of view. To be by myself was the chief object; to be able to look from the outside (so to speak) at what I continually felt was for me a false position. I was happy enough all day, and all night too, as long as I was at work and duty; but I always appeared to myself as an actor; so in my spare time my first impulse was to get off the stage.

In Portsmouth I could hardly get to any place and be really alone, and I don't mean to imply that, had I been able to do so, I should have spent all my spare time thus. But I mention it because I remember the strong desire I had to be for even a quarter or half an hour by myself with myself, and I think I felt the want of it more than anything else. I daresay quite half my evenings (*i.e.* after I became a non-commissioned officer) were spent in some duty; and my most usual resorts on spare nights were

Southsea Pier, where a good band was generally to be heard, or sometimes to theatres or concerts—very often to an evening service; and before returning to barracks I always contrived to get some supper, as stated before. Of course, whenever I was fortunate enough to get any friend's house to go to, that was a real treat, and probably the best thing of all for me. But whatever I did, or wherever I went, the one feeling I had strong, up to the day of getting my commission, was to avoid meeting my brother comrades in arms in hours of relaxation.

It never occurred to me during the day or in barracks that they were a nuisance, or even that I should be glad to be rid of them, but work over and relaxation begun, I wanted a change, viz. to be by myself, or to enjoy the society of my equals. To guard against any misunderstanding on this point I must add that, during my whole time in the ranks, whatever my position, I never felt the slightest discomfort in my relations to the other men, whether giving orders or having to obey them; these being purely matters of duty, I did not trouble myself about the social rank of those I had to deal with. In the case of meals and sleeping, these being also matters of necessity, I did not, after the first week

or so, trouble myself much about my companions—though perhaps rather more than when actually on duty. When it came, however, to the time that was perfectly my own to do what I liked, my natural inclination led me to do what I have said above, and, on the whole, I think the feeling increased the longer I remained in the ranks.

CHAPTER IV.

Guards and piquets—Guardrooms—Drinking on guard—Duties of guards.

HAVING pretty well discussed the private soldier's free evenings, it only remains to state what duties he is liable to which would interfere with his more pleasant occupations, and except on very rare occasions there are only two evening duties for the privates, viz. piquets and guards, which they take in regular rotation, and which they might count on having to do once a week each, thus leaving them five nights free out of the seven.

In the case of non-commissioned officers, the case is quite different, as there are many duties which would detain them in barracks, in addition to the piquets and guards.

The piquet duty is very easy. About a dozen men or so (varying according to the requirements of the garrison), with a corporal and sergeant, have

to parade about dusk with their side-arms, but no rifles, and patrol the streets, going along very slowly, staying out about half-an-hour or an hour, then returning to barracks. Probably they will have to go out again just before "tattoo," returning shortly after the time that all men have to be at home. The duties of the piquet are simply to keep order in the streets, to take charge of any drunken soldiers, or any that may be out after proper hours. The duty lasts for twenty-four hours, and during that time the men composing the piquet are not allowed to leave the barracks except on duty (parades, etc.), so that they may be ready whenever wanted.

Going on guard is a very different matter; in fact, as I have said before, it is in some places the chief duty a soldier has to do; and one might almost say that a standing army is required purely to furnish guards and sentries, the time between whiles being kindly given to the commanding officer to teach his men what he can in the way of manœuvring and shooting. This happily is not the case everywhere; to be continually going on guard[1] is most depressing

[1] For the sake of the uninitiated, I may explain that the expression "on guard" applies to all soldiers who are doing the duty of guard work, during the whole period of twenty-four hours, from the time they leave the barrack-square for their various stations until they return to the barracks again.

and monotonous, besides being in many places very fatiguing; but it is necessary to make the most of this duty in order to keep men properly up to the mark. Any default or neglect is magnified into a serious crime by its having occurred "on guard," and the "guard-mounting parade," or inspection of the men before they march off to their respective stations, is the severest test a soldier will have to undergo as to his powers of keeping his clothes and accoutrements clean and smart. A spot on his waist-belt, or a badly-folded coat, will without doubt entail on the offender "an extra guard," and I think this may be taken for granted, that if the sentries are smart and active on their posts, and if the little details of guard duty are properly carried out, the regiment to which these men belong is well drilled and well disciplined. It is an especial test of the sergeants and corporals; they are often quite free from any supervision of officers; they must enforce discipline entirely on their own authority, and may have to act promptly on their own judgment; all this is excellent education. As far as my experience carries me, I should say, on the whole, that the guard duty is performed carefully and even conscientiously.

Some sergeants will run the risk of being a little

lax, but the great majority, whatever they may be in barracks, are careful to obey every order to the letter when on guard; and I should decidedly include myself among the latter. Many times when not on guard I may have slurred over little faults or perhaps "not have noticed" (!) such a thing as an old soldier going quietly to bed when tipsy, but once away in command of a guard, I was as strict as I could be, and very often warned the men not to attempt to take any liberty with their orders.

The worst of it is that it becomes difficult for soldiers to realise that guards and sentries are any use, that they are anything more than a mere show and formality. In some places, of course, this is quite the reverse, *e.g.* where the sentries are posted to overlook convicts at work, or where there may be some particular orders about certain persons allowed to use a certain road or gate, and in other cases of this sort, they must use their wits and keep their eyes about them. But in many situations, a sentry may go on time after time, and never have a soul near him, or be required to use his authority in any way, and thus the "familiarity breeds contempt."

No doubt the mere presence of soldiers in certain definite places is a good thing, even if they had

nothing to do, but it may be doubted whether the soldier takes the same view; and he may even go so far as to think he would be as well away, enjoying himself in the canteen, or lying comfortably in bed. In fact, I have often heard men complain that they had nothing to do on sentry, and that they considered their whole duty to be "to pay proper compliments to all officers, and in case of fire to alarm the guard." However, I think our men do this monotonous duty very well, and that it is a good thing for them that they should have to do it.

To go a little into particulars on this subject, I may begin by saying that every day the garrison authorities send word to the various regiments what guards they will have to furnish men for on the morrow. The sergeant-major of the regiment (as soon as he knows what number of men are required) gets from the orderly-sergeants of each company a return, called "Nights in bed," which shows exactly how many days or nights it is that each man has had since he was last on guard. By this means the duty is equalised among the various companies; the sergeant-major detailing those men who have had the greatest number of "nights *in bed*," to take their turn at a day and night on guard. The ser-

geant-major does not *name* the men for guard, that is left to the orderly sergeants of each company after reference to the duty-roster book, where every man is marked up with the date of his doing any special duty. The sergeant-major merely gives the number of men required from each company.

Men almost always know about when their turn is coming, as the "duty-roster" is kept in alphabetical order, and so when the "Robinsons" are going on guard, the "Smiths" know their time is at hand; and begin putting on the final touches of pipeclay and polish. As a matter of regulation, the men are duly warned, and answer to their names at "tattoo" roll-call, so that there may be no mistake, at which time they also find out what guard in particular they have to go to.

The next morning the men for guard are not required to attend the usual early parade. In some places, indeed, the guards mount early. This is done chiefly where the climate is very hot, as at Gibraltar, where in the summer the guards go on at 6.30 A.M.; but the usual time for guard-mounting parade is 9.30, so that they may be sent off to their guards by 10.0.

The men and sergeants parade in regular "march-

ing order," and, as I have said, must be scrupulously clean, but there is no necessity now (as there used to be in the "good old days") for every man to have a complete field kit in his knapsack. All that he need trouble about is that it looks well; and so each man takes what he thinks may be useful, for instance a book or writing materials, or perhaps a pair of trousers that wants mending, and a very usual custom is to take an old coat to wear at night under the greatcoat, as the latter has a tendency to take the gloss off new tunics.

The only necessary things to take on guard are knife and fork, soap and towel, brush and comb, clothes brush, boot brush, and blacking. Sometimes also men carry their own rations of bread and meat, coffee, etc.; but the more usual plan is to have this sent to the guard-rooms by "ration-carriers" from the regiment. After the inspection is over every man is given ten rounds of ball cartridge, which of course he must return or account for when he comes off guard next day.

Besides the men actually detailed for guard, there are always a few extra hands warned as "waiting guard." They have to parade exactly as if they were really going on duty, and in case any other

man turns out dirty, or for any other reason is not fit to go on guard, one of these "waiting men" is ready to take his place.

As soon as the guard has reached its destination, the men are told off into three reliefs; the first relief at once going on sentry, to enable the men of the old guard to come back. When the old guard has marched away, the remaining two reliefs take possession of the guard-room; the commanders of the guards having previously handed over and taken over all the articles belonging to the room, and for which the commander of the guard for the time being, is strictly responsible.

All guard-rooms are furnished in much the same manner. There are tables and forms (like those in barracks), shelves, etc., and special racks for the rifles near the door. There are always cooking utensils and a good fireplace, as the men have to cook their dinners; and there are the usual coal-boxes, buckets, mops, and brooms, and generally plates and basins. For the guard to rest their weary limbs on, are provided what are termed "guard-beds," the only similarity to the piece of furniture generally known as "a bed" being that men *do* go to sleep on them. These guard beds are more like large low tables

than anything else. There are probably two or three, but always enough space on them for every man in the guard to lie down at once. They are made entirely of wood, stand about two feet high, with a slight slope down from the head, and quite six feet long. A pillow is provided, made also of wood (from what I remember I should say it was very hard wood) which runs along the full width of the bed; it is much like a very low shelf or narrow box, rising straight off the flat part of the bed, about four inches high and six wide.

Soldiers are fully accoutred the whole time they are on guard, being allowed to take off nothing except their chakos, so they have not much opportunity for making these beds any more comfortable than they are by nature. With their greatcoats on, waist-belts outside, scabbard of bayonet and ammunition pouches, all helping to make them uncomfortable, the men have not much inducement to oversleep themselves; but many is the time that I have been most thankful to stretch myself out on the guard-bed, and have slept soundly for a couple of hours, which is the full extent to which a non-commissioned officer can go. During the coldest part of the winter the guards are sup-

plied with extra greatcoats or watch-cloaks. These are put on over the ordinary greatcoat, and only worn by the men actually on sentry, who pass them on from one to another when relieved. Extra coal is also given sometimes, and generally arrangement is made that the men should have a second supply of coffee, which is made during the night or early morning, and is very acceptable. Lamps or gas are of course provided. Coals are brought round every day, to prevent one guard using more than their share.

A careful sergeant ought to overlook every part of the guard-house before the old guard marched away, and would expect to find, each in its proper place, such things as handcuffs, keys of gates or buildings which might be in charge of the guard, boards of orders, etc. etc.

As I stated before, the guard is divided into three reliefs. A relief is always composed of the exact number of men required to supply all the sentry posts belonging to the guard. Each relief stays on sentry two hours, so for every two hours a man has to do walking about he has four hours in the guard-room; or, in other words, during his twenty-four hours on guard-duty he has eight

hours of "sentry go," and sixteen to sit still. Supposing a man to belong to the first relief, he would be on sentry from 10 to 12 A.M., 4 to 6 P.M., and the same hours during the night. When the guard first mounts, one man of the third relief is selected to act as cook. He is the only man of the guard allowed to take off his clothes or accoutrements, and he must be ready to take his turn at "sentry go" with the third relief at 2 o'clock, and after that he has to keep properly dressed like the rest.

The only relaxation of this rule is just after daylight in the morning, or about 6 to 8 A.M., when the whole guard are allowed time for washing and cleaning their boots, etc., also for folding up their greatcoats. But all the men must not be employed thus at the same time, the general custom being to keep one relief ready dressed in case anything should be wanted.

The men sitting or resting in the guard-room have to be ready at a moment's notice to jump up and get outside with their rifles, and looking tidy and smart. It is a great proof of the capabilities of a guard if this is done quickly, quietly, and steadily; and during the twenty-four hours there

are a good many opportunities of their powers being tested. The signal is given by the sentry outside the guard-house, who shouts out at the top of his voice, "Guard, turn out." The instant this is heard inside, every man, whether reading, eating, or sleeping, leaps to his feet, probably repeating the same words to himself and his comrades, catches up his rifle, and runs out as fast as he can, tidying himself a little as he goes, and in about twenty or thirty seconds the whole guard ought to be standing steady as a rock, each man in his place.

It is curious what a magic effect those sounds "Guard, turn out," have to the soldier. I have seen a man lying fast asleep, and another trying to wake him by calling to him—calling his name, even pushing him, and hardly any notice taken of these efforts. But when the signal for the guard was given, the sleeper was on his feet in a moment.

There are several *regular* occasions on which the guard must turn out, and which they may be more or less prepared for. Every guard, for instance, has to be under arms and inspected by its commander at "retreat," "tattoo," and "reveillé;" in other words, at sunset, at 9.30 P.M., and at sunrise, the exact time being taken from the bugles which

then sound in all barracks. Besides these three occasions, the guard will be visited twice by a field officer, and probably also twice by an officer on some neighbouring guard. These visits will be at uncertain hours, and each officer has to go once during the day and once by night. In addition to the above there are many things which may call a guard out at odd times, so that men must be always on the alert. Thus a General riding past is entitled to the compliment of the guard getting under arms, or a regiment marching by, the same, and in big garrisons this occurs pretty often.

The habit of getting under arms quickly and steadily can only be acquired after considerable practice, and sometimes men get into trouble for unsteadiness when they really do not deserve it, drinking being assigned as the cause, when in reality it is fatigue and sleepiness combined. Suppose the guard to be turned out late at night or early in the morning, one man, perhaps, comes out awkwardly, his chako on one side, or his chin strap hooked up; he does not find his place at once, and does not stand steady; the probability is that his name will be taken, and the next morning he will be charged with "drinking on guard." I know

men do get beer sometimes on guard which might make them unsteady, but apart from that it is no easy matter to wake up all of a sudden in the middle of that sleep which is produced by "sentry go," and a hot stuffy room, and in less than half a minute to be standing steady as a rock, in full possession of every faculty, and every detail of dress correct. But soldiers do acquire this in a wonderful way, and the sooner the young soldier learns it the better for him, although, if he is unsteady, it is not necessarily the result of drink.

It is very wrong on the part of those that do it, and yet a common practice in many places for soldiers on guard, and even sentries on their posts, to be offered beer and spirits. I suppose there is no rule stronger in the army than that which forbids intoxicating liquor to be touched by men on guard; also, as I know, there are few occasions on which a glass of beer would be more welcome. Of course the soldier's civilian friends know this, and thus it happens that, if he gets on a secluded beat, he may be given the chance of a drink by some too generous acquaintance. I have even known a man sent on his post sober, and at the end of his time discovered to be drunk!

But about the worst case I ever came across was at one particular guard at Gibraltar, where a certain old man, a Spaniard, made it a regular practice to give wine to the sergeant and men; and if he could get what he wanted, the wine used to be circulated very freely. It was merely given as a bribe to get a certain gate open before the right time, and so save the old Spaniard the trouble of waiting. For his duty was to pass into Gibraltar during the night some workmen from the ships in harbour; and the gate was only unlocked by the sergeant of the guard at stated intervals. If, therefore, the workpeople came just too late, our friend would try to get them admitted at once, instead of waiting an hour. There was no great breach of discipline in opening the gate, in fact, it depended more on the good nature of the sergeant than anything else, as long as only the correct people went through; but no doubt the wine was a strong inducement, and that was the real fault, and the consequences have been fatal on that guard more than once to my knowledge.

Such a gross case as the above could not occur in many places; and the more usual occurrence would be for some one man to be brought a small quantity of beer, which he would contrive to drink

without any one else knowing it, and perhaps be all the better able afterwards to do his work.

Before leaving the subject of guards, etc., I ought to mention the difference of work of the privates and non-commissioned officers. The former alone do "sentry go;" but although they are on sentry for two hours at a time, they are not expected to walk about all the while. If it rains, they stand in the sentry-boxes; if it is very hot, they stand in the shade. In tropical climates there are wooden sun shades placed on purpose. The only necessity is to avoid lounging. If they move about, they must march "smartly;" and if they stand still, they must stand still "smartly." The corporals have to go round with every relief, *i.e.* to post the sentries, every two hours, day and night, besides taking round patrols, etc.; and the sergeant in command of the guard has to inspect every relief before it marches off, and on its return; but he never leaves the guard-room except to visit the sentries occasionally, to see that they know their orders and are doing their duty. Thus, on the whole, the corporals have the hardest work to do, especially in the distance they walk, which would hardly ever be less than twelve or fourteen miles, and besides this they never have even two hours at

rest; while the privates have four hours, which gives them at least one chance of a good long sleep during the night, and four chances during the day and night together. The sergeant has the whole responsibility both as to the conduct of his men, and the safety of all property belonging to, or in charge of, the guard. He also is responsible for all prisoners committed to his charge; and if there are many in the guard-room at once it is no sinecure, as they often fight each other, and are troublesome in many ways. The sergeant of the guard has also to make out a report, called "guard report," which shows the time and place where each man was posted sentry; also the number of prisoners (if any), and a list of the things broken or damaged belonging to the guard. This "guard report" is made out in duplicate, on a regular printed form which the sergeants have to buy for themselves; and I am very sorry to say that there are many officers who, when on guard, expect the sergeants to provide "guard reports." It is hardly fair that sergeants should have to expend their pennies on these things for themselves, but certainly not when there is an officer over them, who is responsible for, and signs, the reports.

One word as to the state of the guard-rooms. They are sometimes tolerably clean to the casual observer, but they only get a "surface cleaning" at any time; and the number of "inhabitants" of a most unpleasant kind is quite dreadful—those that hop, and those that crawl, in multitudes. As some one observed: "What a terrible loss of life would occur if a guard-room were burned down."

CHAPTER V.

Appointed lance-corporal—Change of work—"Orderly corporal"—Musketry at Fort Gomer—The gymnasium—Church parades, etc.—Chaplains—Schools—Passes—Furlough—Christmas in barracks.

IT will be right for me now to return to my more personal affairs, for I have been giving all sorts of experiences, which I certainly did not acquire during the two weeks that I was doing the duty of "full private."

It was almost exactly a month after I "took the shilling" that my name appeared in the regimental order-book as appointed lance-corporal. This was very quick work, but the natural result of my special advantages. I was well up to my work in drill, etc., and was presumably the best educated, and in the Colonel's opinion most trustworthy of the young soldiers, and likely to make a good non-commissioned officer, owing to my age and position. I was not put over any one's head,

but merely chosen as a fit and proper person to be entrusted with the responsibility of promotion. I was certainly quite proud of myself, and in a very short space of time had my tunic decorated with the "one stripe," the outward sign of the lance-corporal's authority (which is worn by them above the elbow), and an emblem of having taken the first step upwards on the soldier's ladder to honour and distinction.

It is curious what numbers of men there are who do not care to be promoted. Men, in fact, refuse straight out, and many who are persuaded to take the lance-corporal's stripe soon request to resign it again. They prefer the life of the private men, dislike the responsibility of being non-commissioned officers and the extra work it gives them, and perhaps more than all the rest dislike having to use their new authority over their old comrades. Then the work is much harder; the lance-corporals having less time to themselves than any other rank, and the sudden change to this from the life of ease and freedom from care which they were used to as privates, must try their zeal not a little, more especially as lance-corporals get no increase of pay.[1]

[1] This refers to the time before the new pay regulations were

I suppose a good captain always has his eyes on those men of his company anxious to rise, and as there was not much doubt about it in my case, as soon as it was possible I was given the opportunity of "bettering myself;" and as in this step I was not in any way put over the heads of others, there was no just cause for jealousy or disagreeable feeling.

The one grand change in my work now was that I could never be asked to do any real "fatigue work." For instance, my name was struck out of the roster for orderly man. At coal-carrying and other fatigues I had only to take part by superintending, and seeing that the men did the work properly; and thus, notwithstanding that I really had more work to do and less spare time, the change was a great advantage, for it placed me in a position natural to my state of life, of using authority and exercising my head more than my hands. But although this was a very considerable step in the right direction, my general mode of life was scarcely altered. The barrack-room was still my home, and I had to eat my meals off the same table as the

introduced. Lance-corporals do now get "extra pay," a most just piece of liberality.

privates, which always made me keep my eyes to my own plate, as the manners and customs at "table" of the "British private" are not always conducive to giving an outsider a good appetite. Of course, also, I had to do my own personal fatigue work, such as making my bed, sweeping out my little share of the floor, cleaning my boots; and what came also rather hard was looking after my accoutrements; for I had very little spare time, and had not got into the habit of doing these things quickly.

Although I have just said that lance-corporals did not have to use their *hands* very much, there is no doubt that they have to use their *feet*. As a rule they are on the go from morning till night, everybody's servant, like a maid-of-all-work, never knowing when to call their time their own. If anything at all extra had to be done, a lance-corporal would certainly have to do it, whether it were taking messages for officers on matters of duty —marching small parties of men, looking after prisoners, etc. Among the more regular duties there was one which implied great responsibility, viz. looking after the gate of the barracks. This duty was also taken by corporals and sergeants, and

was a decided test of a young non-commissioned officer's powers, and, indeed, any one might get into a scrape over it. The most important orders for the "gate orderly" were to prevent men leaving barracks at improper times or improperly dressed, to stop any men "confined to barracks" from going out at all, to prevent improper persons coming in, and to make prisoners of any soldiers under the influence of drink. The very first time I was on this "gate duty" I might have got into a scrape through letting a man out at the wrong time. I was at the gate before breakfast, and a private, properly dressed, was just going out, when I stopped him and told him he could not pass. He immediately produced a piece of paper folded like an official letter, and said he must pass to deliver this document; without looking at it I let him go out. In about ten minutes he came back and informed me with a grin that he had only been to a neighbouring public to get some beer, but that I had better hold my tongue about it, because *I* should get into a row about it if it was known. On reference to my colour-sergeant I let the matter rest, but gained a very useful piece of experience.

We had a very strict regulation about walking-

sticks—no man was allowed out unless he had a cane of some sort in his hand. For, as the sergeant-major impressed upon me when first I joined: "We can't allow our men to go about with their hands in their pockets or swinging their arms about just as they like." And many men I have had to send back from the gate because they have had no stick. Very often they would say: "What am I to do? I can't get one in barracks, and you won't let me out to buy one." This certainly seemed an awkward case to deal with, but the orders had to be obeyed, and if the man could not beg, borrow, or steal, he had to stay at home!

But of all the duties performed by lance-corporals, by far the most important, and requiring most attention, is that known as "orderly corporal." There is one detailed for each company, and he generally carries it on for a week. A rough outline of his duties may be given by saying that he may never leave barracks, that he has to superintend the daily and hourly routine of the details of barrack life, and is especially responsible for getting all signatures to the many forms and requisitions required.

But I can convey a better idea by running

through briefly the chief things an orderly corporal would have to do in any one day of his week's tour of duty. The first thing in the morning, he has to go round his company's rooms, and find out if any men are ill, then give the names to the orderly sergeant. Draw bread for the company; divide it among the messes and married people. Take parade state and other papers to the Captain for signature. Get ammunition for men going on guard. Collect bread, coffee, etc., for men's breakfast who are on guard. Answer bugle for letters, and distribute letters to the company. Make up book of groceries, and take it to the quartermaster. Get school report for "orderly sergeant." Give the rations for the men on guard to ration-carrier. Draw vegetables, etc., for company. March man to hospital with breakfasts. March prisoners to guard-room. Get defaulter sheets. Take passes to orderly-room. Draw meat for company and married men, and distribute it. Attend orderly-room. Parade school party. Parade gymnasium party. Collect and give in rations for men gone on guard. March man with dinners to hospital. Get letters, etc. (second delivery). Get school report, and parade afternoon school party. Draw and distribute tea bread. Collect tea rations

for men on guard. Get passes from orderly-room. Take pass roll to "guard-room." Parade men for piquet. Take order-book to officers. Letters, etc. (third delivery). Take ration return to Captain for signature. Be present at tattoo roll-call to take down names of men absent, and be very glad to get into bed directly after.

I don't wish to imply that the above is an exact account of the whole duty of the orderly corporal. I think it includes the most essential points; but every day there would certainly be some variation, and it must be allowed that a man ought to have a tolerably clear head to carry out all these things comfortably, not only in doing everything at the right time, but in doing each separate thing properly. For instance, if in getting the rations for men on guard one share too few was sent, or if one was sent to a wrong guard, it would cause the greatest inconvenience.

Another point which has impressed itself on my memory was being called by the bugle, and which was pretty sure to interrupt one in any spare time. If the sergeant-major or quartermaster wanted to give any order, they always sounded the bugle call for "orderly corporals," who had to jump up on the

moment, whatever they were about, and run out to see what was wanted; until at last I quite began to feel for those unfortunates who have to answer the front door bell in a London house. As for the actual amount of time occupied in these little jobs, I think I may fairly say that it was a case of "all day;" in fact, I quoted my experience at the time by saying that I was at work from 6.30 A.M. to 9 P.M., with only sufficient leisure to rub over my rifle and waist-belt and clean my boots (being called away for something when only one was polished), to read quickly through the *Times*, to do a few sums in algebra with a sergeant, and to get a cup of coffee before bed-time. I might almost put into the mouth of the orderly corporal the murmuring of Tennyson's "Brook"—

> "For men may come, and men may go,
> But I run on for ever."

Speaking of "bugle calls" reminds me how very important it is for every member of the regiment to be thoroughly conversant with the language of the bugle. All the ordinary business of barrack life is regulated (as to time) by the bugle, and it might cause great delay and inconvenience if any man did not know for whom or for what the bugle was

sounding. For instance, there is one call (or tune) for getting together the school party, another for summoning the defaulters or men confined to barracks, another when the bread or meat is ready for issue, and even an orderly corporal could not be expected to go round and get all the right men together when wanted. It was no trouble at all to me to learn these bugle calls; but I have been surprised at unmusical and ignorant fellows picking them up as well as they do; but professed ignorance is never taken as an excuse for not complying with an order sounded on the bugle.

About two or three weeks after I was made lance-corporal, I was taken away from the regular duty, so that I might learn the musketry work. All recruits have to go through a course of drill and shooting, during which time nothing is allowed to interfere with them, their attention being entirely confined to the art of "shooting straight." The course lasts nearly a month, and if the musketry instructor had his way, I suppose the recruit would not be allowed to speak, think, or dream of anything else the whole time.

As there was no rifle range at Portsmouth, we had to go to a place about three miles off called

Fort Gomer, and I got my first insight into life "on Detachment," *i.e.* being separated from the Headquarters of the regiment. I shall not say much about that now, as later on in my service the whole regiment was broken up into small detachments. On this occasion I did not like it, as the discipline was bad, and the party, which was composed of about forty young soldiers, and a few non-commissioned officers, was made up of men from all the companies; and so I lost the small amount of comfort I had obtained by getting acquainted with the men and sergeants of my own company.

Two or three things helped me to get through the month tolerably pleasantly. In the first place, we were quite in the country, and I could manage to get out in the evenings and enjoy a little solitude; also we were near enough to the sea to allow of my getting a bathe every morning; besides this, I was fond of shooting, and glad of a chance of making a few "bulls'-eyes." In this, again, I had advantage of my companions, and at the end of the course came out at the top of the list with the best score.

While at Fort Gomer I made friends with another lance-corporal, who was a very well educated

man. I hardly think he could lay claim to being a gentleman; but he knew places and people that I knew, and, as far as I could make out, he had been connected with a wine business, come to grief through gambling, and so enlisted. But though he could speak French pretty well, and German a little, he had all the manners and language of an ordinary soldier, and I feel sure never aspired in those days to getting a commission.

From him I learnt that the recruits with whom I was working were jealous of me, and of my getting on so fast; but it did not trouble me at all, as it was evident that they had no idea of my progress being prejudicial to them; and it was merely a little show of spite at the young hand having beaten them at drill and shooting. However, this jealousy was kept so dark, that I should never have found it out for myself; just as was the case with another thing I learnt from my lance-corporal friend—viz. that I was commonly pointed out in the regiment as being "the recruit with £800 a year, who had enlisted for the purpose of earning a commission!"

Although I did not like these remarks about my money, and my looking forward to becoming an

officer, I daresay, on the whole, it was better that the proper state of the case should be known.

I need hardly say that these reports did not originate from me. I suppose they came through the officers' mess, and the servants there hearing me discussed. I was always reserved on these subjects, and avoided them to the best of my power, as I did not want to "give myself airs," or claim any superiority, except in actual matters of doing my duty as a soldier; but in these latter I spared myself no pains to show that I could do my work more honestly and thoroughly than those of my own army rank. In fact, I tried to prove that the gentleman could beat the soldier at his own trade. I think at first the men and sergeants were rather shy of me, and refrained from asking me about myself and my prospects; but later on, when I was a sergeant, and had made myself thoroughly friendly with them, they used often to make casual remarks about my future, but always perfectly good-naturedly. Thus one would say, "I suppose we shall soon hear of you getting your commission?" or a friendly private thus—"Well, sergeant, it won't be long afore we are all saluting you as officer?" which I really felt to be so near the truth, that I could but reply

to them in chaff, or by saying, "I certainly shan't refuse one if offered me," or "Some time before that takes place, I expect." But I think this is proof that there was in reality no ill-will shown me.

Our course of musketry concluded, we marched back to barracks in Portsmouth, and I am sure the men in my room did not feel much jealousy, as they appeared really pleased to see me again, and perhaps rather proud of me for having shot well. All such performances are discussed most fully in the barrack-room, for soldiers have not many "interests," and are glad of any little incident as a fresh topic of conversation.

I now returned to the regular work again, of going on guard, orderly corporal, etc., and also went through part of a course at the gymnasium—in this, as in other things, being put into the middle of a class. All recruits must attend the gymnasium for a certain length of time, and immense good it does them. Some hate going there, others like it, and take it up as a means of self-advancement, and if they get on well, may be appointed "instructors," etc., and lead a very pleasant life. I had never gone in for gymnastics, and did not much care about the course; in fact, I was very glad when it was

over; but of course I got on quite as well at it and better than many of the raw and clumsy recruits or weakly lads that get into the army.

About this time also I began to feel what I suppose was the effect of the change of life and work and habits. At least that is the only way I can account for a violent attack of neuralgia that came on me, and settled in my head, causing me considerable pain while it lasted. These head and brow aches came on daily about twelve o'clock, reached a climax during the afternoon, and passed off at bed-time. This continued most regularly for about two weeks, but I managed to get through my work without going to hospital. This was at the end of October, or quite two months after my joining. It may have been brought on by the extra work, or more likely by my having given up the suppers which (as I mentioned before) I used to get at the Temperance Hotel. When I went to Fort Gomer, I could not get any extra food, and lived entirely on the soldiers' rations; so when I returned to headquarters I tried to do the same. But, taking these headaches as a "sign," I reverted to the indulgence of an evening meal whenever I could get out of barracks.

It must have been about the same time, also, that what is termed "route-marching" began. This is carried on all through the winter months, and consists of simply marching out along the roads for five or six miles and home again, with a rest or two on the way. It is not exactly hard work, but I found it very tiresome and tedious. We had to carry our knapsacks and folded greatcoats, rifles, etc., and had to keep strictly in the ranks the whole time. "A constitutional" into the country may be all very well for people who are sitting indoors all the rest of the day; but a lance-corporal's legs don't require this extra amount of stretching; and as I was not accustomed in those days to carrying "the pack," my shoulders used to ache a little before we got home.

This "route-marching" takes place about twice a week, and is varied by marching out a few miles, when the whole regiment is posted as the sentries or outposts of an imaginary army. These days were rather longer than the plain marching out, but easier, as one got a good rest in the middle. As a rule we used to parade about 9.30, and get home to dinner at 1.30 or 2 o'clock.

There is yet another sort of parade I have not

mentioned so far, although it was the very first that I attended with the whole regiment. That was the Sunday church parade. The parades are always in the morning, and men have a choice of three sorts of religious exercise—viz. the Church of England, commonly called the Church party, the Romanists, usually called the Catholics; and, the Wesleyans or Chapel party. When a recruit enlists he is asked what he belongs to; and having made his choice, he has to stick to it. In my Regiment the Church party was the most popular. The band always played us to church and back, and very often led the singing, the brass instruments not being used in church. For some reason these church parades are very unpopular; whether men simply think it no use or waste of time I don't know, but they will always get off if they can. Yet, on the other hand, men continually go to an evening service, and I have often heard them say they like to go to church once on a Sunday. Whilst service is going on men almost always behave quietly and properly, but seldom kneel. They join pretty well in the singing and responses, and listen to the sermon quite sufficiently to discuss it afterwards, which seems a common practice. Well do I remember my

feelings at this my first church parade and first appearance in public, so to speak, when the hymn was given out, and the band struck up a well-known tune composed by my father. I believe the British soldier is supposed to be able at all times to conceal his sentiments, and I did not "shame my cloth" on this occasion, but it might be called "a coincidence."

I have said in another place that soldiers do not bother or laugh at one another for any religious habit they may have acquired; but it must be confessed there is great carelesness shown in these respects; perhaps it is not to be wondered at when one thinks how early most soldiers are taken away from or leave their homes; and so lose the good influence they *may* get from a domestic life—but which they cannot get in the same way in barracks. This may partly account for the sad fact, that I can scarcely recall an instance of any man remaining to the "Holy Communion." I *have* seen men at an early service, even there very rarely; but I think I hardly ever remember any one staying in church after the parade service was over. It occurred to me at the time that there were great difficulties in the way. For a certain number of men having been marched to church, [according to regulation] the

same number ought to be marched back again, and some such rule is really necessary; otherwise men might slip off somehow, and remain out about the town. What then could a soldier do, who wanted to remain to the Holy Communion? Either he must get leave to stay by asking the sergeant or officer of his company, or he must stay without getting leave and be reported as "absent." Now it must be confessed that this is not an encouraging state of things, and quite enough to account for the very small number of communicants.

So strongly is this impressed on their minds that it would be most difficult to make them believe they might remain in church without "leave" and yet escape punishment, as the following little anecdote will show. At one place where we were quartered an order was issued by the General (or whoever was the right authority) that the regulation referred to above about "reporting absent" would be cancelled. This order was read out in the church by the chaplain, and explained to the men, viz. that they had nothing at all to do but just stay in their places, and walk home by themselves after service, and no questions would be asked. In the barrack-room afterwards this was discussed, as all such matters

would be, and one man expressed the general sentiment by saying: "It is all very well for such an order as that to be given out, and for the clergyman to say it will be all right, but I am quite sure I won't 'chance it,' and get 'run in' for being absent from parade."

Whether there is any remedy I don't know, but for my own part, and for various reasons, I would never stay after a parade service, if I could possibly manage it any other way. The whole question about chaplains, and how they can get at the men, is very difficult, and I know they are not satisfied at present, for I have talked the matter over with many of them. It is too long a subject for me to go into now, but I might say this, that as long as regiments (which are like small parishes of 500 or 600 souls) are moved about, and come under fresh chaplains every year or two, it will be impossible for much good influence to be brought to bear. The chaplains and men are perpetual strangers.

During the month of November I had to pass an examination in the army or regimental school. I had been excused the regular attendance at school, as I satisfied the schoolmaster that I was capable of reading and writing, and that I could gain my

"certificate" whenever the examiner came round. On this occasion I sat for a "second class" and was not "plucked," my "testamur" being duly handed to me afterwards, on which I was given credit for considerable proficiency in the "three R's." The examination consisted of two pieces of writing from dictation, including a lot of orders with officers' names, etc., reading prose and poetry—difficult examples of the elementary rules in arithmetic up to vulgar fractions—balancing a Dr. and Cr. account—keeping an imaginary savings bank account for a year, and making up the accounts of a mess for one day, *i.e.* all about the groceries, vegetables, etc. etc.

I believe I disliked this school work as much as anything—whether I felt it to be *infra dig.* for an Oxford B.A. to be asked to stand up and *read!* or whether it was the dreadful thought of the disgrace it would have been had I failed to get what I was trying for. But it was no doubt right for me to produce proof of my education. The regulations about the school are that every recruit must attend between five and ten hours a week, until he can get a fourth-class certificate. . All corporals (not lance-corporals) must have a third class, all sergeants must have a second class. So I was now qualified

for promotion to sergeant, and thus gave the Colonel the excuse for putting me over the heads of the other lance-corporals with only the third class, which did happen later on. Although education may count for a great deal, I believe a commanding officer would be justified in filling any vacancy by promoting the man, in his opinion, best able to do the duties. For besides myself I have seen many men pushed on rapidly over their seniors, and *vice versa*, many men at the top of their rank in length of service, continually passed over.

Nothing else worthy of note happened for some time, but I carried on my work satisfactorily, did not get into any scrape, in fact, continued the even tenor of my ways. But I have omitted so far to make mention of what is a real indulgence to all soldiers, and was to me even a greater gain than to others, viz. the granting of "passes" or permission to be away from barracks.

This is called in the regulations "an indulgence to be granted to soldiers of a good character," and I believe most commanding officers make their own special rules on the subject. On the passes of my regiment was the following:—"This man is one month clear of the defaulters' book, is not

addicted to drink, does not overstay his pass, and is an established good character;" and I very often found myself thus described and making my way out of barracks with a pass up to twelve o'clock at night. Non-commissioned officers used generally to mark out the words quoted above, as it was supposed to be an indignity even to be called a "good character." Of course they could be nothing else! I made use of passes whenever I could, so as to avoid the "going to bed" time in barracks, but my duties as corporal and sergeant often kept me weeks at a time without a chance; and another view of the matter is that it would not be well for the non-commissioned officers to be continually away in the evenings, as at that time they may be especially wanted to keep order.

A pass went through a good many hands before it was finally approved. First, the orderly sergeant or colour-sergeant put his initials to it, to show the man was not wanted for any duty. In the case of a non-commissioned officer, the sergeant-major also initialed it; then it was taken to the captain of the company, and if he recommended the man the "pass" was finally laid before the Colonel for his signature. Of course all this took time, and we had to make up

our minds and write out our passes at least the night before we wanted leave.

The chief uses I made of "the indulgence" were to go to the theatre, or concerts, or to spend the evenings with any friends I might have in the place. The chaplain at Portsmouth was extremely kind to me, and I had some friendly naval officers in the place; and the relief was intense at getting a comfortable meal with a table-cloth, and "gentle" society afterwards.

In most cases men reserve their passes for the pay-days; very often getting leave to be away till 6.0 in the morning; and this is a great advantage in one way, that if they take too much to drink, they get over the effects before they show themselves in barracks; also it is a great nuisance to have men coming into their rooms at all hours of the night waking up their less festive, but probably more sleepy, comrades; it being far from easy to get about in the dark without tumbling over the beds or forms. Passes may be granted up to forty-eight hours, and that was the greatest comfort to me when by some lucky escape from duties I could get such a long spell of domestic life. The only chance was to be away for a Sunday, drills alone being quite enough

to put a stop to long passes during the week. But if I could calculate on not being required for guard or piquet, or orderly-corporal, etc., on either Saturday or Sunday, I could get some comrade to promise to take any minor duty for me. Then, 2dly, supposing I had any place to go to, I could make nearly sure of having leave from about 2 P.M. on Saturday until 6 A.M. on Monday.

During my first four months' service I had three opportunities of getting this long leave; once I went to the Isle of Wight with my brother, who came down to see me; and twice I spent a Sunday with friends near Southampton. I consider that was a fair average of what a non-commissioned officer might get; but the private men had many more opportunities. Some used regularly, as the week went round, to put in a pass for Saturday night and Sunday, these men being for the most part "married without leave," *i.e.* their wives were not on the establishment of the regiment, and therefore could not live in quarters.

The Colonel did not give me the slightest advantage in respect of leave, and so wherever I went I had to wear my uniform. I did not object to this regulation on my own account; but it would have

enabled me to see much more society had there been any relaxation of it; as some people would have felt awkward and even "shy" at sitting down to dinner with a genuine corporal! and I had to respect their feelings by avoiding their company. There had been a man in the —th just before my time, from all accounts quite a gentleman by birth, and with lots of friends. He used to go out in Portsmouth in ordinary clothes, dining at messes, and on board ship, etc., in his black evening suit, but whether with leave or without I do not know. However, I stuck to my uniform, and was by no means ashamed of it. But the comfort I did manage was to keep at an hotel or at a friend's house if likely to be going there much, a small portmanteau with white shirts, thin boots and other little luxuries; also a night-shirt, for that was what I never allowed myself in barracks. I had also a suit of plain clothes, which came in useful once or twice, when I was staying at places well away from the Head Quarters.

It was a most curious feeling in these little visits, the utter and absolute change—of life, of all the surroundings, almost of myself; the change from the barrack-room to the pretty drawing-room; from the harsh loud voices in the former to the quiet soft

tones in the latter, and to feel and realise that I was taking a legitimate part in scenes so different. The only fear was that the change back again would be very trying; but by getting to work at once I hardly thought of it; and after the first few months, of course the barrack life was so familiar to me that it seemed quite natural returning to it.

I think I have now given a pretty good account of myself, and how I made my start in soldiering. My "Queen's shilling" had proved a decidedly lucky shilling so far. I had got well through the hardest part of my time, without any breakdown in health, without any strain to my morals; and without having to undergo any discomforts greater that what all English gentlemen will endure willingly, if there is anything to be gained by enduring them. I had done four months' service without getting into the slightest military scrape, and I had arrived at being not only on good, but really on friendly terms, with all my fellow-soldiers.

And so with a good heart and contented mind I started away from Portsmouth on the 15th December 1873, with a month's furlough to look forward to at home. I started from Head Quarters in uniform, but having obtained leave to wear plain clothes

during my furlough, I armed myself with my portmanteau, and changed my clothes in the railway carriage, and thus once more appeared a "respectable" member of society.

Furloughs are granted to soldiers all through the winter months—the only restrictions being that the applicant must be "dismissed recruit drill" and must be out of debt and have his kit complete, these conditions being in addition to the usual one (where it is a case of an "indulgence"), viz. a good character.

Almost all men who want to go on furlough ask for a month, and the month must begin either on the 1st or the 15th. According to the regulations 12 per cent, all ranks included, may be away at a time. Men may take with them their greatcoats, but not any part of their accoutrements. They have part of their month's pay advanced to them before they leave, and the rest is given them on their return. My object in applying for furlough from the 15th December was that I might spend my Christmas and New Year's Day away from the regiment, as apart from the pleasure of getting those days in the comfort of home life, I avoided the discomfort of a Christmas in barracks; the festive scenes on those occasions not being at all to my fancy.

"Christmas dinner" is a great institution in all regiments. The officers, or at any rate the captains, give money to their companies, and the canteen fund is also drawn on, so that a substantial repast may be provided; wine and beer are on the table, and the rooms decorated with the most artistic taste. At dinner time the captains and their subs. visit their own companies, and go through the ceremony of drinking a glass of wine with their men, the officers' health being given in an appropriate speech, by some man who is selected by his comrades as having the necessary power of eloquence. The unfortunate Colonel, who goes all through the barracks, has to submit to eight or ten speeches, and even worse, to pledge all the eight or ten companies in glasses of so-called wine. If there is any one thing that would make me dread being Colonel of a regiment, it is the thought of going round the barrack-rooms on Christmas day!

Dinner over, the majority of the men settle down to enjoy themselves in any way they like, and are not interfered with at all by the non-commissioned officers. If they like to drink too much they can do so, and this is too often the case. I have even known a good colour-sergeant give an enormous

amount of beer to the men in the barrack-room, and lock the door on them. He felt certain many of them would get drunk, and took that precaution to prevent their getting into trouble. With even a *chance* of such a state of things, it is easy to see how anxious I was to escape being involved in like scenes.

I think I was rather afraid of my furlough in some ways; it seemed a risk to break in upon my work just as I was settled down to it, and it certainly might have made a return to my "uncivilised life" rather hard to bear; but I have no doubt that the good I got from my month at home was far in excess of any harm it may have done to my resolution "to stick to it"; and it may not be out of place just to add here as a general remark, that the whole life was much more bearable than I had expected, and that I felt at this time more convinced than ever that, unless something unforeseen should happen, I was quite able to make my experiment end in an undoubted success.

CHAPTER VI.

Return from furlough—Promoted corporal—Given charge of a barrack-room, and influence gained thereby—Appointed lance-sergeant—Sergeants' mess described—Duties of corporals and lance-sergeants—"Orderly sergeant"—Details of how all the men of my company were employed.

1874.

THE 14th of January found me returning to Portsmouth. I travelled in plain clothes, changed into my uniform at an hotel, where I also took the precaution of having a good dinner, and thus fortified made my way back to the familiar barrack-room.

On this occasion, as on others, the men were apparently really glad to see me back again, and it always came on me as a sort of surprise, though a very welcome one; for my own feeling was that I kept away from them, and kept to myself as much as possible; and with the one exception of soldiering we actually had nothing in common; notwithstand-

ing which they chose to be friendly with me, and I did not reject their advances.

No sooner had I shaken down than I discovered fresh promotion awaiting me. During my furlough, a vacancy had arisen in the roll of corporals, and the Colonel had given me the step. I believe if I had been asked beforehand whether I should like this promotion, I should have refused it, because by it I was put suddenly over the heads of all the other lance-corporals, and ran the great risk of incurring their dislike and jealousy. Happily for me, I was not consulted, and whatever bad feeling there may have been had probably passed away before I came back from home; but I did find out afterwards that one of the lance-corporals had complained of my being promoted over his head, and the Colonel had explained it by saying that I should not stop in his way very long, implying that I should make a vacancy again by another step; but in case any one reading this should be inclined to side with the "plaintiff," I must add again that I believe all commanding officers would feel themselves at liberty to promote whoever was in their opinion the best man, entirely independent of seniority.

Perhaps this being the first time I was distinctly

brought forward, it may have had a greater impression on the other non-commissioned officers; but I believe it soon was taken for granted that I should get on extra quickly, and also that I was the right person to get any promotion available. Whatever my comrades may have thought of it, I must say they behaved splendidly to me from first to last; both those whom I had passed over and those whom I was likely soon to stand above on the regimental ladder, continued most friendly, and I was never pained (as I easily might have been) by nasty innuendo or sulky looks. I have no doubt my career was freely talked about, and perhaps I was freely abused behind my back; but the non-commissioned officers as a body, and the sergeants especially, were "gentlemen" enough never to hurt my feelings by bringing these subjects to my notice.

Shortly after my return from furlough I was given a considerable advance in responsibility, by being put in *charge* of a room. To effect this I was moved from my old quarters, and went upstairs. On the whole it was a pleasant change; I thought at the time I was rather too young a soldier to be made responsible for the barrack-room discipline of fourteen or sixteen men; but I got on all right, and

after I was used to it, I certainly found it advantageous to be in command, as I had so much authority in enforcing things that conduced to my own comfort—such as thorough cleanliness, windows open at night, strict silence after lights were out, and putting a check on the habit of bad language. It was from this time onward that I found out what a great influence the non-commissioned officers ought to have over the men. I believe I should be correct in saying that the sergeant (or very rarely the corporal, as in my case) in charge of a room has more power of bringing his influence to bear on the privates, than any other man in the regiment, from the Colonel downwards; and I would even go farther, and say that he has it quite in his power, in time, to alter the very characters of those under his charge. He is continually with them, day and night, in and out of the room at all hours, and when there the complete master and final referee on all matters; in fact, whatever they do there, he is the doer of it; and it seems to me that it is only by this continued and personal contact with the men that any real good can be done to the bad or doubtful characters. Certainly, when I left the barrack-room and became an officer, I felt a most sad loss

of power in the certainty of influencing the men. No doubt the character and "style" of the officers have a great effect on all the lower ranks, perhaps more than they themselves think or wish; but they must leave it to the non-commissioned officers, and chiefly, as I think, to the sergeants in charge of rooms, to form the habits of the mass of privates. Of course the sergeant, however anxious to do good, has a very small number really under his personal supervision and guidance; but this makes it all the easier for him to learn each individual character; and if all the sergeants in charge were of one mind, and working together to stop bad habits, what a difference it would make in a regiment!

About this time I had the honour of being called on by the head chaplain at Portsmouth; and it would be a most imperfect narrative if I did not mention my first acquaintance with Archdeacon Wright. I think it was just after a "coal-carrying" parade that he came up to speak to me, and asked me to call at his house, which I did not hesitate to do the very first opportunity. I found in him a real good friend, as indeed he is to all soldiers. Being an ardent soldier himself, he makes all those others with whom he is brought in contact feel that

their interests are the same as his own: and he is ever working for the spiritual and temporal good of those committed to his charge. Unfortunately, the regiment was not destined to remain at Portsmouth very long after I became personally acquainted with the archdeacon, but his house was always open to me, and many evenings I have spent there, greatly to my advantage and comfort.

I also became tolerably intimate with the junior chaplain, besides having the good luck to fall in with an old college friend, curate of a church at Gosport, of whom I saw a good deal later on. Wherever I went, I always found the chaplains most cordial, and I think they were glad of an opportunity of talking to an educated man about the life and characters of the inmates of barracks; and it was owing to these numerous talks with numerous chaplains that I discovered their difficulties, to which I alluded before.

I believe it was about the end of January that the Colonel began talking about recommending me for a commission. I remember he took me quite by surprise one day, saying that it was high time something was done, that I had got on so much better than even he had expected, that he should be pleased to do his best for me, but that he could not

begin. He advised that some one of my relations should write to him, and ask what he could do for me; that he would then write out a report of my qualifications, etc., and would go to the War Office himself to urge my claims. Of course this was done at once, and so, after only five months' service, the question of my commission was raised, not that I had any hope of getting it immediately, for it very soon appeared that I must at least wait until I was a sergeant; but it seemed wonderfully soon even to have the subject talked and thought about.

The fact was certainly known in the regiment, for the sergeant-major told me at the time that the Colonel had spoken to him about it, and that whatever promotion I got would not hinder others for long, as I was soon to be recommended for my commission. As will be shown, however, there was disappointment in store, and a long time of waiting before me.

The next turning-point in my military career to be noticed was being appointed lance-sergeant, and perhaps of all my steps upwards, this one made most difference to my personal comfort and "position" as a soldier; and how well do I remember the colour-sergeant coming behind me unobserved, where

I was standing in the barrack-room, and popping the sergeant's sash over my head.

I might make the same remarks here about my being put over the heads of others, as I did when discussing the propriety of my promotion to corporal, except that in this present case I never heard a word of discontent. And one reason may have been, that all lance-corporals like being made full corporals; but many corporals do not care for the appointment to lance-sergeant. In the soldier's opinion a lance-sergeant is very badly paid, and the rank of corporal is, on the other hand, considered the most lucrative of any, for a corporal and lance-sergeant have the same pay,[1] and the former, living in the barrack-room, spends less than the latter, who becomes a member of the sergeants' mess, and has to pay a considerable subscription to it for daily "messing," besides the incidental expenses resulting from the higher rank.

In military parlance, corporals are *appointed*, not promoted, to lance-sergeants, and, strictly speaking, the rank is the same; but the lance-sergeant is really a much bigger swell; and when there is a

[1] Lance-sergeants have had an increase of pay given to them since the time I write of.

vacancy among the full sergeants, it is always filled by promoting a lance-sergeant; but the real gain to me, and probably I appreciated it more than the majority, was becoming a member of the sergeants' mess.

According to the Queen's regulations, it is optional to lance-sergeants, but, as a fact, they almost always do join the mess at once; and it is quite right that they should do so, as they gain position in the eyes of the privates, and mix with the upper classes of the regimental society.

I cannot do better than give here a description of the sergeants' mess, as I found it, and of the extra comforts which I got from it; just mentioning, in the first place, that, though probably the mode of living is much the same in all the messes, the material part, *i.e.* buildings, rooms, furniture, etc., must necessarily vary in different garrisons and barracks.

The sergeants' mess in the Anglesea Barracks was a detached building, and on the opposite side of the square to the men's quarters. It consisted mainly of one large room, and leading out of it two smaller ones, which served as a kitchen and bar for sale of liquors respectively. The kitchen was well

supplied with all necessary articles, and in it everything was cooked for our meals, the sergeants' rations, etc., being kept quite distinct from the men's. At the bar we could buy beer, porter, and various spirits, everything being paid for on the spot; but, according to regulations, the bar was not open for the sale of spirituous liquors at an earlier time of day than the canteen, viz. 12 noon. At "tattoo" the canteen was shut up, but the sergeants' mess had the privilege of keeping open till 11 P.M. These rules were, however, often broken, and sergeants used not unfrequently to "get a glass" at very early hours, and I have known cases of the mess being kept open long after the proper time.

The large room was used as general sitting-room, dining-room, and billiard-room, half the space being occupied by a good full-sized billiard-table, which was generally being played upon by somebody, the sum charged being twopence for a game of fifty, paid only by the loser.

The other half of the room was taken up with a large table for meals, and several small tables, on which were a good supply of weekly and daily newspapers, magazines, etc. There were a few low arm-chairs, and a number of common wooden kitchen

chairs. We had a comfortable carpet or druggett, hearth-rug, etc., and pictures on the walls, besides a large mirror over the chimney-piece. This was a vast improvement on the barrack-room, where I had been accustomed to use my bed for chair, and my knees for writing-table; but without doubt my greatest gain was at meal times. The table was laid quite nicely with a tablecloth, which seemed to me a real luxury, and the places all properly arranged with knives and forks, glasses, etc. Instead of the tin cans of soup, we had an ordinary tureen, and soup plates took the place of basins. A bountiful supply of vegetables was brought in steaming from the kitchen in proper dishes, and an unmistakable sirloin or round of beef was a matter of common occurrence, and it was always carved quite *à la mode*, not hacked up into so many portions, and seized on indiscriminately. To give an idea of a day's food in the sergeants' mess, I must quote from a letter written soon after my promotion:—"For breakfast we had sausages, an unlimited supply of bread and butter, and very fair coffee, which was brought in to the table in coffee-pots, but already mixed with milk and sugar. At dinner we were given a nice soup, round of beef, plenty of potatoes, and cabbages; and

at 4.30, tea, placed on the table already mixed in the teapots, as the coffee was in the morning, and again abundance of bread and butter." There was no "meal" after this; but there was always bread to be had, and, with some cheese from the canteen and a glass of beer, one could make a very passable supper.

It was also a very pleasant change to be "waited on," for, although the men employed did not actually hand the plates round at meals, there was always some one present to get anything we wanted. The soldiers regularly employed in the mess were—one man as cook, and sometimes an assistant; one waiter, who had to lay the cloth, bring in dinner, etc., wash up, and get from the bar anything we wanted. A sergeant was selected to act as caterer. His duty was to sell the beer, etc., at the bar, to provide generally for meals, and was responsible for all stores of eatables and liquors. He was exempt from all other duties while acting caterer, and it was considered by the sergeants as a lucrative post.

I mentioned before that there was a fatigue party detailed daily to attend the sergeants' mess; they were under the orders of the caterer while

there, and had to clean up generally, floors, windows, tables, etc., which would have been too much for the waiter or assistant to do alone.

The management of the mess was conducted by a committee of a colour-sergeant as president and two sergeants (one married, the other single) as members. They were responsible for all usual expenditure, paying tradesmen's bills, etc., and checking the caterer's accounts. Every sergeant on first joining had to pay an entrance fee of about five shillings, and, besides a small monthly subscription, every dining member had to pay a sum of about ninepence per day for messing, which made a considerable hole in the pay of a poor lance-sergeant.

There were some things that surprised me greatly about the sergeants' behavour, and above all the noise they made. As I had the luxuries of table-cloths, cups and saucers, carpet, etc., I suppose I also expected subdued tones; but I soon found my mistake, for the way that they all talked at the height of their voices one against another was quite astonishing, and the only advantage over the barrack-room in that respect was that there was very little bad language, and the talk was all good-natured. I found some of the sergeants quite

pleasant companions, and able to talk sensibly and well on certain subjects. They were all very cordial in their reception of me, and treated me in much the same way that the men did, *i.e.* perfectly friendly to the extent I wished, and yet always showing a sort of respect for me and my opinions.

From this time onwards I had nothing to do with the men, nor in fact with the corporals very much, except as far as duty was concerned, for the sergeants are encouraged to keep together at all times, and avoid mixing with the lower grades during hours of leisure. For a sergeant to be seen associating with a private soldier was almost sure in the —th Regiment to bring on him severe punishment, and they were always recommended during "play time" to keep aloof from any one over whom they might have to exercise authority in the ordinary course of duty, or at least to avoid all familiarity.

The appointment to lance-sergeant enabled me to relax my self-imposed rule of cleaning and looking after my kit and accoutrements; and I must say it was a great relief to get all that done for me. I might quite well have kept a bâtman before, but it seemed better to get thoroughly into the way of doing for myself. As a sergeant it was the correct

thing for me to have some one to do for me. So I selected a smart old soldier and paid him one shilling per week, and for that sum he was responsible that my rifle, belts, knapsack, pouches, etc., were always clean and ready for me to put on; also he had the pleasant task of folding my greatcoat, and keeping all the buttons of my tunic, etc., bright. Such things as making my bed and cleaning my boots I did for myself still. The chief gain in paying a bâtman was the time it saved me, for, as I stated before, non-commissioned officers have very little leisure, and I felt that it was very unprofitable for me to be spending the few half-hours that were at my own disposal in "soldiering."

The duties of corporals and lance-sergeants are very much the same, for both do sergeants' work to a great extent. There are certain duties that are only taken by full sergeants, and there are a few that lance-sergeants take and not corporals; but in many respects they are identical, and as I did not say much about it when relating my promotion to corporal, I must do so now.

In the first place I should say that as a corporal and lance-sergeant I escaped that tedious work of orderly-corporal to the company that I described at

some length; but I had to do the "gate duty." Also as corporal I had to do the same duty on guard as when I was lance-corporal, but as lance-sergeant I was actually in command of the guard—a matter of considerable responsibility. As a lance-sergeant I escaped many little jobs, or small fatigue parties, which would be given to the charge of corporals, lance-sergeants being reserved for the command of larger parties which were not so frequent. I had a new duty in the shape of attending the canteen and keeping order there, as a rule not much trouble, though rather tedious—as in other cases, the chief bother being on pay-days. The sergeant on duty at the canteen was responsible that no defaulters came there, except from 6.0 to 8.0 P.M.; a list of them being kept for that purpose, and he had to turn everybody out when the first post sounded at 9.30 P.M. When I have described the other duties that fell to my lot, I will return to the subject of the canteen, as I have said nothing much about it yet.

I must speak more fully about the duty of orderly-sergeant, as that is by far the most important work that occupied my time. It is taken in turn by the sergeants, lance-sergeants, and full corporals.

who are doing ordinary company duty, and each one does it for a week at a time. But although there might be in one company four sergeants and four corporals, the probability is that not more than three out of the eight would be available for orderly-sergeants, which would give them this seven days' job pretty often, and orderly sergeants may never leave barracks except on duty, parades, etc., so that sometimes it became rather irksome.

To speak very roughly, the orderly-sergeants have to regulate all the duties of the men of their companies, and to tell them each day what they have to do, and are especially responsible that the right number of men are on parade.

It is generally in the evening about 5.0 or 6.0 P.M. that the orders for the next day are given out, and I cannot do better than begin at that time, and give the ordinary routine of an orderly-sergeant's duties for twenty-four hours. When the sergeant-major is ready, he has the bugle "for orders" sounded, and having thus got together the orderly-sergeants of each company, he reads out, and they copy into a book, all the instructions for the next day's work. Also such details as "promotions," "reductions," verdicts of court-martials, etc. These "orders" are in fact the

means by which the whole battalion hears the voice of the commanding officer, and they have to be written accurately and distinctly. When finished, the sergeant-major gives out the detail of duty for each company, naming the number of men each has to find for guard, piquet, or fatigue, the orderly-sergeants taking down only what concerns themselves individually, and then dispersing to their own rooms. When there, they get out the duty-roster, mark off the men that have done special duty during the day, and pick out the men for the next day; first, those for guard, then those for piquet, or fatigues, as required. The "parade state" can then be drawn up, by subtracting the men for extra duty, from the total of men in the company.

There might be some other returns to be made up, but this over, there would be no more work for the orderly-sergeant until 9.30 P.M., and he might adjourn to the mess and get a game of billiards and some supper. At "first post" all the men of a company assemble in one room, and the orderly-sergeant calls over the names, which have to be answered by their respective owners. The sergeants would know what men were away on duty, or had been given passes, but besides these, every one, whether non-com-

missioned officers or private men, had to be present in barracks, and with his company at the "tattoo roll-call." The next proceeding is to read the orders, and finally, to call the name of any man for guard next day, telling him what duty he may be wanted for.

The names of all soldiers absent from this roll-call are entered in a "tattoo report" and given to the sergeant-major, and sergeant of the guard at the barrack-gate. This finishes for the night, unless, as is sometimes the case, the sergeant-major sends an order after every one is in bed, or even in the middle of the night, to have a "check roll-call." This means that the orderly sergeant goes through his rooms to see if any man has left his bed or broken out of barracks.

The first thing to be done in the morning is to make out a report of any men reported sick, then be at the early drill, seeing that the right men are present. About 9.15 the guard begins mounting, and the orderly-sergeant has to parade and inspect his men. Directly this is finished the regular regimental parade begins, the orderly-sergeant being responsible, as before, for the men being present. Perhaps this parade lasts an hour, and at 11.0 the business of the orderly-room is

transacted. This is when the commanding officer deals with the prisoners, and the orderly-sergeant is responsible that all the witnesses, etc., are forthcoming; sometimes the orderly-room business takes a long time, and until it is all finished the orderly-sergeant must remain. At 1.0 he has to be ready in the barrack-room to take the officer round the dinners of the company, again reporting all present or otherwise. The next duty is the afternoon parade, which is probably not a very long affair, from 2.0 to 2.30 or thereabouts; and with the exception of being present again at tea-time, this would be the last job until the bugle sounded again for "orders."

The above does not profess to enumerate all the duties of the orderly-sergeant; for instance, there would be many small duties to be regulated, such as seeing that the right men attended school or gymnasium, and there would be returns to be made up, etc.; in fact, there is plenty to keep him busy, and many things requiring care and forethought.

There is a point which I may explain here which puzzled me very much when I first joined, and no doubt seems curious to many, viz. why there should be so few men on parade? Why,

when a regiment has, say 500 men, there should be only 250 or 300 out on a day, when it might be expected every one would appear? It is often asked, "Where in the world do the men get to?" (I can quote a case which is a purely chance one from an old "parade state" I have before me.) There it appears that the total strength of "H" Company, —th Regiment, on November 7, 1873, was 4 sergeants, 4 corporals, 51 men. When the officer came on parade at 10 o'clock that day the sergeant reported, and perfectly truly, "All present, sir"—and whom did he see? 2 sergeants, 1 drummer-boy, 3 privates! I must remark here that this was only an ordinary drill, not a special parade, but still it was the chief parade of the day. Where then were the other non-commissioned officers and 48 private men? As follows:—8 men on guard; 3 bandsmen; 4 servants or grooms; 1 corporal, 1 private, employed as tailors; 1 pioneer; a corporal and a private doing clerks' work; 2 men sick; 1 cook; 1 sergeant and 2 privates on some regimental duty, such as canteen or quartermaster stores; 5 men on the public works, such as road-making or building; 13 men on various fatigue duties. Total, 44 privates, 2 corporals, 3 sergeants. The remaining individuals

were away from the regiment altogether, but still counted on the strength, viz. 1 sergeant and 1 corporal on some staff duty, possibly in London or Aldershot, 1 corporal on furlough, and 7 privates were either absent without leave, or on furlough, or in prison, or on some detachment duty. There is another point to be mentioned, viz. that out of these 51 privates there were only 21 who were to be counted on for going on guard; the tailors and clerks, etc. etc., not being considered available; and of these 21 there were only 4 who had enjoyed 7 consecutive nights in bed; 2 men had had 6, and all the others less. The foregoing account of how my company was distributed on the day mentioned shows very clearly the extremely varied duties that may or must fall to the lot of the British soldier; and this is to be observed, that out of the 51 privates or lance-corporals[1] only 21 were available for the disagreeable work of guard and fatigue, and they were all of them thus occupied, whereas the remaining 30 (more than half) were probably earning extra money, and at a more pleasant duty.

To make the list of *possible employments* complete, I will add the few I have not had occasion to men-

[1] On the parade state lance-corporals are reckoned as privates.

tion above—viz. shoemakers, hair-cutters, painters, carpenters, waiters in the canteen, waiters in the sergeants' mess or officers' mess, orderlies (*i.e.* messengers), assistants in the school, and may be some others. All of these would have some extra-duty pay, or perquisites, and would escape the *disagreeables* of soldiering.

CHAPTER VII.

The canteen—Spring drills—To the Gosport Forts—"On detachment"—Bad characters and rough times—Crimes, offences, and punishments—Fort Gomer—Fort Grange—Appointed "drill corporal"—Aldershot manœuvres—Promoted to sergeant—Camp life and hard work.

THE subject I now propose to speak of is the canteen, which I have alluded to once or twice, but never described fully, and as it is such a great convenience to soldiers, it must not be omitted. We are informed that "canteens are established in barracks for the exclusive use of the troops, and for the ready supply to them at reasonable prices of wine and malt liquor (spirits being forbidden), groceries, and other articles." The canteen is indeed a sort of "universal provider," and the soldier can get there all sorts of things, besides the groceries and beer, which are the chief articles sold. For instance, writing-paper and all stationery, walking-sticks, requisites for sewing and mending, also the

large "prohibited!" pins for securing the greatcoats, and the many other little things necessary for keeping the arms and accoutrements in order. Although this shop is provided so near at hand, of course soldiers are in no way prevented from dealing with the ordinary tradesmen in the town, but civilians are not allowed to purchase anything in the canteen, which would be sure to cause complaint.

The canteen is opened before breakfast for the sale of groceries, for, as I have said previously, almost all soldiers get something for adding to their breakfast ration of bread. When in the barrack-room I always had my "pennyworth of butter," which I got from the canteen, folded up in a piece of paper! Cheese was also a very ordinary addition to men's breakfast, and young recruits frequently went in for jam, which was (like my butter) always carried away on paper. No malt liquor may be sold before 12 noon, nor after tattoo (9.30 P.M.), nor on Sundays during the hours of divine service.

The management of the canteen is vested in a committee of three officers, who meet monthly to "take stock," examine the books, and inspect the quality of the articles sold; they also regulate the

prices so as to recover the ordinary wastage and certain permanent charges on the canteen. The daily business of the shop is conducted by a sergeant called "canteen-sergeant" and two privates as assistants. The sergeant is simply salesman, and is not allowed to have any interest in the profits of the canteen; but it is a post much sought after by the sergeants, and is no doubt very lucrative; the amount of actual pay being only limited to six shillings a day according to the Queen's Regulations. He has a position of some responsibility, for occasionally there is a large amount of money taken—the greater part of the soldiers' pay being often in the hands of the canteen-sergeant before nightfall. The profits accruing from this quick return are used (after settling certain necessary charges) for the benefit of the soldiers of the regiment in some such ways as the following:—games or appliances for the recreation-room, apparatus for theatricals, or concerts, cricketing kits, boats, seeds for gardens, etc. etc., and moreover extra messing on Christmas day, extra coffee before early parades or on guard. By these regulations the best interests of the soldier are considered, for he gets what he requires of good quality, and at

very little above cost price, and what profits are made out of his money come back to him in the form of new benefits.

Where a sergeants' mess is established, of course the sergeants need not make much use of the canteen, but in order to prevent the mixing of the different grades, provision is made of a room for the sole use of non-commissioned officers. Also in many public-houses in garrison towns the same arrangement is made, and sergeants can sit down comfortably without fear of being seen associating with privates.

Having in another place spoken very fully about guards, I need not do more than just refer to the fact that very shortly after I was made lance-sergeant I had to "command a guard." As I have said, it is a time of great responsibility, and although commanders of guards, like other mortals, are fallible, and apt to slur over their duties, I may safely aver that on this occasion I was very particular that all should go right. There is a custom that the sergeants when commanding a guard for the first time should treat the rest to beer, and I was of course duly invited to follow the usual precedent. I remember that I was asked shortly after the

guard mounted, but with due precaution I withheld my promise until just returning to barracks, and did not actually dispense my bounty till the men were safely dismissed from my charge.

The time I am now writing about was the month of March, and we were in full swing of what are termed "spring drills," which consists of nothing more nor less than putting the whole battalion through all the elementary exercises as taught a recruit when he first joins. Old soldiers think it a very foolish custom, but it is doubtless of great utility, as smartening up many who have been able to escape the regular routine drill. We had three good parades each day, and thus it becomes rather hard work for the instructors. I had the good luck to be given command of a squad, and thoroughly enjoyed myself, although three hours shouting a day soon made me very hoarse.

On one of these days towards the end of the time we had a practice at "trooping colours." I was immensely impressed, as it is not only a very pretty ceremony, and accompanied with a great deal of music, but the colours being the centre of all this "worship" (I can scarcely use any other word) it teaches the youthful soldier very forcibly what duty

and reverence is due to them. This is deeply instilled into the heads of all good warriors, and I have heard many a man taken to task, and greeted with no very complimentary epithets, for venturing to pass by the colours without paying them (according to regulations) the highest honour.

Towards the end of March 1874 we had to turn out of our comfortable barracks in Portsmouth and move to the forts on the other side of the harbour, beyond Gosport, and here I may remark a curious fact connected with the soldiers' character. It seems an impossibility for a regiment to move from one "quarter" to another, without men breaking out into an excess of drinking and other defaults, and very often this is the case with those who have previously been steady and well behaved. It seems a strange time to choose, because then the officers and non-commissioned officers are especially on the look out, to see that everything is done properly, and there is no chance of any escape. Probably it must be accounted for by the great irregularities of the duties at such times, and by there being very many extra duties, especially "fatigues," which always bother soldiers and put them out of temper, and as they possibly think that their best solace is to be found

in "their cups," they take that means of getting relief from their troubles, and having to say good-bye to many friends, no doubt they are frequently treated to excess also.

Thus then, in accordance with the usual custom, when we only moved across the harbour to quarters three miles off, there was a great deal of extra crime (military crime), and actually on that short march four men had to be put under arrest for being drunk. One of these was quite an old soldier, a Crimean man, with two or more good conduct badges, and shortly coming on for discharge and pension. Yet the consequences were inevitable, and he as well as the others were tried by court-martial, and sentenced to a fine of £1 and forty-two days' imprisonment, with hard labour. Another case of pretty sharp discipline occurred about the same time, and may have been the result of the offender being put out of temper by the troubles of the shift of quarters. There was a lance-corporal, a thoroughly quiet, steady fellow, with hardly an entry against him in the defaulter books. He was told by the sergeant (as he was standing in the barrack-room) to go and draw the bread from the stores; but he allowed the order to pass unheeded, and did

not move; the sergeant repeated the order, and the corporal again took no notice and made as if he had not heard. He was immediately placed under arrest, and was tried by a "garrison court-martial," which could scarcely give a less punishment than fifty-six days' hard labour, and might give as much as two years.

The regiment had now to undergo the discomforts of being distributed about between four different forts; and such a state entails a good deal of extra work, as so many details of discipline have to be referred to the Colonel at the Headquarter Fort, and again all orders have to be sent round from the Headquarters to the rest of the regiment, all of which creates much delay, and adds immensely to the difficulties of conducting business.

Another thing is, that discipline often becomes ax when only a few men are together,—perhaps one company in an outlying detachment, and deprived of the watchful eye of the adjutant or sergeant-major. Duty for the non-commissioned officers is made heavier, for many jobs which could be easily managed by one man for the whole regiment when together, have still to be carried on in each detachment. One of the main discomforts

I had to put up with, was, that in my fort we had no sergeants' mess, and I had therefore to return to barrack-room food; and there were twenty-two men in my room, so the scramble was worse than usual. I spoke, a little way back, of the wonderful way men and sergeants get taken away from their own companies to other duties. I can now give a practical example:—When we were settled in Fort Gomer, we had an "establishment" of four sergeants and four corporals, but six of these were away, and I and another were left alone to work the company.

I made my debût at a new duty about this time, viz. "barrack orderly-sergeant." His principle work is to look after the defaulters, that is to say, the men who are confined to barracks as a punishment. This "confinement to barracks" is awarded for small offences, and may be extended to twenty-eight days, during which time the defaulters are prohibited from using the canteen, except at certain hours. They have to answer their names at roll-calls every hour to keep them in barracks; and for fourteen days they may be ordered punishment-drill for an hour at a time, two or three times a day extra to the usual parades,—this drill being merely

marching up and down the barrack-square in heavy marching order. Instead of the punishment-drill, defaulters may be given fatigue-work to do. All this is superintended by the barrack orderly-sergeant. When I took over the duty, which lasted a week, I had sixty-one defaulters to look after, most of them being recruits of another regiment, who were attached to our barracks in Portsmouth; but when we got to Fort Gomer, I had only the defaulters belonging to that detachment, and I made them weed the paths and "clean up" generally, the fort having got into rather a bad state.

Before finally quitting my "Portsmouth" experiences, I must recount a very troublesome time I had to go through as commander of the regimental guard, one night just before we changed our quarters. This guard is situated at the gate of the barracks, and any man confined in barracks for drunkenness or other crime, or any man coming into barracks after hours, or the worse for liquor, has to be kept there until dealt with by the Colonel. The day in question was a "pay day," the source of all evil; and, besides the usual difficulties, there was the extra trouble to be expected from the prospect of the coming move, and additional bother from all

the —st regiment recruits attached to us. The expectations of a rough time were fully justified, and as early as 6 P.M. men and boy-recruits began to be brought in and placed under my tender care, and the surveillance of my guard of nine men. At tattoo roll-call (9.30 P.M.) matters became worse, for twenty men were reported absent, and it might be expected that most of these would put in an appearance some time during the night. Before long, I had fifteen men in the prisoners' room, all drunk, and in a state of the greatest uproariousness.

The prisoners' "lock-up" was a room inside the guard-room, with a door between, which had to be always kept locked, for fear of any one making his escape. Besides swearing and shouting at each other, these wretched men added to the tumult by nearly kicking through the door; then I had them brought out one by one, and took off their boots, cleared the room of everything that they could hurt themselves with, had the fire cleared out, and made them as *un*comfortable as possible. Then they took to fighting each other, and my guard were considerably knocked about in trying to stop them; and one man, who abused me in horrid language, was afterwards rewarded by seven days in cells.

After a time, but not until the best part of the night was gone, we got them tolerably quiet, the result of locking up the most troublesome in separate little cells, which I had to get cleared out for the purpose, and the remainder were "cooled" by their bare feet and other discomforts; and no doubt, as the stimulus of drink died away, they began to get really tired out by the violence of their behaviour. A night like that certainly shows soldiers in the worst possible light; and happily, it is not of frequent occurrence. Being the first experience I had of having to quell such a row, I felt very doubtful of how I should get through it; and it was harder for me on this occasion, as my guard was composed of very young soldiers; but we pulled through all right, and though I was thoroughly tired out with the night's work, the experience was useful. At various times I have had to superintend, and almost take part in, scenes quite horrible, that have occurred in guard-rooms. I say "superintend," because it is the direct duty of the sergeant in "command" to keep well out of reach of the prisoners who may be wild through drink. Their crime is made much greater if the sergeant is in any way threatened or treated with violence.

Later on in the year of which I am writing, when we were getting great numbers of recruits, it was of frequent occurrence to have a guard-room full of men, who really seemed, for the time being, to be nothing less than "*mad.*" They would be brought into the guard-room by a large escort, and then ensued such a scene of violent struggling with the men on guard who were endeavouring to restrain them, that it would end in their being left naked, their clothes torn to pieces, and the room covered, and even myself splashed with their blood. Such men cannot be left alone, they would probably kill themselves, and I have had, as a last resource, to put on handcuffs, lash their legs together, and lock them up separately in empty cells.

These characters were happily few and far between, and were soon well known in the regiment. I could now, five years after, mention their names, and it was a certainty that if they got any pay they would be brought madly drunk into the guard-room that night. These men were for the most part, deserters re-enlisted, or men discharged with ignominy from other regiments returned to their old trade. In "the good old days," such gentlemen would have been marked with a D or BC, and

would not so easily have been able to re-enlist; but now in compassion for *their* tender feelings they are just left alone, and able at any time to come back and corrupt the young recruits, and be a perpetual trouble to the whole regiment, and worry the very life out of the non-commissioned officers.

To spend a twenty-four hours on guard "with the door of the prisoners' room *open*," in other words, to have no prisoners to look after, was indeed a treat after such scenes as I have described above. Of course many men, and indeed the majority of those in confinement, were quite quiet, but even *they* required a good deal of looking after. To show for what different offences men were confined, I will conclude by giving the crimes charged against eight prisoners, who on one occasion were under my care at the same time. One man was charged with breaking out of barracks; one man, drunkenness; two men, absence without leave, and selling their kit (a most usual offence when money was running short); three men had given themselves up as deserters and re-enlisting. All these seven were awaiting trial by "court-martial," and had to be kept in the regimental lock-up until such time as they received their sentence. The eighth man was

confined for having gone on a parade, ordered to be in "marching order" without having a proper field kit in his knapsack!

It is a great test of discipline and general efficiency when a regiment is broken up into detachments, as we were during this spring. At the "Headquarters" things are carried on much as usual, but it is almost impossible to maintain exactly the same routine throughout, when there are four or five different "commands." A great deal of extra responsibility falls on the non-commissioned officers, and in this, as in so many other cases, the well-being of the regiment depends upon their integrity.

It is a most essential point, however, that the various officers in command should deal with the military offences brought to their notice in the same manner, and with the same degree of severity. Our Colonel most wisely provided for this by drawing up a "scale of punishments," which was sent round to all the detachments, and was, moreover, placed in every barrack-room, so that all men might know how their sins of omission or commission would be dealt with. A few extracts from this "code" may be interesting, and as it remained

in force at least as long as the Colonel was in command of the regiment, it will convey a good idea of what "crime" means in the army, and how it is punished.

"Staying out of barracks after hours" (*i.e.* 9.30 P.M.), punishment varying (according to frequency of crime, length of absence, etc.): from three days' confinement to barracks to twenty-eight days—or even short imprisonment and deprivation of a day's pay.

"Staying absent from school, or parade," or being "late for parade." Punishment (if a similar offence had been committed within twelve months) of seven days or up to twenty-eight days' confinement to barracks.

"Drunkenness" is always punished with fines varying from 2s. 6d. to 10s., according to the frequency of the cases; and if five times drunk in twelve months, a man would be tried by a court-martial. [I have known a man, one of those characters recently spoken of, sentenced to a year's imprisonment with hard labour, and discharged with ignominy at the end of it, for repeatedly getting drunk.]

Any non-commissioned officer getting drunk,

however good his previous character, was certain of being tried by court-martial, which implied "reduction to the ranks."

On the crime of "disobedience of an order personally given by a superior," the code was very plain. Whether the disobedience was only by word, deed, or, as I have heard the Colonel say, even in the look on the man's face, the offender would be tried by the highest form of court-martial. Whether the order appeared important or not, instant obedience to superiors was to become as the second nature of all soldiers.

"Grumbling when detailed for any duty." Any punishment not less than ten days confined to barracks, or up to a court-martial.

"Swearing or using bad language of any sort." No specified punishment, but severely dealt with.

"Being improperly dressed when walking out, or talking to improper persons in the streets." Confined to barracks not less than ten days.

"Undue familiarity on the part of non-commissioned officers with the private men," *i.e.* drinking, or joking, or associating with them as companions. Very severely dealt with; probably trial by court-martial, which must either acquit the

non-commissioned officer or reduce him to the ranks.

"The overlooking of offences" by the non-commissioned officer, *i.e.* failing to take notice of crimes committed by privates. A certain court-martial, and reduction to the ranks.

The above are some of the "crimes" most usually committed by soldiers, and it will be seen that they vary considerably in magnitude. Non-commissioned officers are not liable to any minor punishments, and, with the exception of being given an extra turn of going on guard or other duty, and being "reprimanded" by the Colonel (which would be entered against them in a book), they can only be punished by a court-martial, and once before a court-martial they must be either acquitted or reduced to the ranks.

All offences, of whatever description, committed by non-commissioned officers or privates, are entered in a book called "defaulter book," whether punishment has been awarded or not. Every soldier has a page allotted to him, some bad characters, of course, finding one page, and even five or six pages, not sufficient for them, and thus the defaulter books become a terrible but certain record of each indi-

vidual's character. Some men who are very careful get through their service without "an entry" of any sort against them (I can reckon myself as among that happy number), and hence it is a common expression for a really good character to be described as "a man with a clean sheet." But there are very few thus fortunate, for young soldiers especially find it very hard to avoid getting into small scrapes either through forgetfulness or ignorance; but although these excuses might get the offender off all punishment, the offence would still appear against him in his defaulter sheet.

The fort I was quartered in now was the same that I had been in the previous autumn while doing musketry.

Portsmouth is surrounded entirely by these outlying works, which hold about two hundred men, or perhaps rather more. There is supposed to be a goodly supply of guns and ammunition in each, but when we were there the forts were certainly not in a fit state for an active defence. The rooms we lived in were built in the main parapet, and covered over by many feet of earth; the door and windows were in the side towards the interior of the fort, and therefore no

shot from the enemy could have done us much harm.

Grass grew abundantly all over the top and slopes of the parapet, also in the big ditch round the outside, so there were many nice places to be found on a fine day for sitting about, when one had a little leisure; but except for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour at a time, I did not have much opportunity of thus enjoying myself, but it was a great improvement on the Portsmouth barracks in that respect, for *there* I could never be alone without going right out and away into the country, but here, with only a spare five minutes, I could make sure of getting into some quiet nook, and continually utilised this power even so far as for saying an evening prayer or doing some quiet reading or writing.

It took the best part of an hour to get into Portsmouth. First walking into Gosport, then crossing the harbour in the steam bridge or in a launch, and so it was really not worth while to go there unless with a "pass" till 12 P.M. I suppose I felt this as less of a nuisance than most of my comrades; but I did miss certain things very much. For instance, the church hard by our old barracks, where I used often to attend an evening service, and the

marine band, which playing regularly on Southsea Pier, often gave me an hour's good music for nothing.

Besides these methods of obtaining nourishment which I had enjoyed so far, there were the pleasant and to me almost necessary suppers at the temperance hotel, which from this time forth had to be given up, except on my occasional visits to Portsmouth with a pass.

Thus the move to Fort Gomer had its disadvantages as well as advantages; but I was so charmed at being really in the country again, that had I been given my choice I think I should have stayed where I was.

However, I very soon had another move to make; and this one was decidedly to my taste. I was offered the post of drill-corporal; and to undertake those duties I had to change from Fort Gomer up to the Headquarter Fort. This suited me very well, for of all the work going on in a regiment, that of drill-instructor was what I fancied most. We had a good many recruits coming in at this time, and so the staff of instructors had to be increased. There was only the regular drill-sergeant over me—a first-rate hand—an "Irishman," if ever there was one, and he and I got on very well together.

In fact, I think he was rather proud of me, because I had learnt my drill so quickly as a recruit, and gave him so little trouble. The work of continuous drilling is decidedly hard; going on shouting and talking for several hours a day takes a good deal out of one, and to drill recruits well one's whole energy must be continually exercised, for if they saw the least sign of flagging on the part of their instructor, they would soon follow suit. To enable the drill-instructors to be always up to the mark, it was an understood thing that they should never be called on to do any other duties. Thus they never had to go out with fatigue parties, and escaped the numerous odd jobs always cropping up; and, above all other advantages, was the fact that they never had to go "on guard."

Our hours of drill were:—

7-7.45 A.M.		9-10 A.M.
11-12 A.M.	and	2-3 P.M.

besides which we often had to give the sluggards an extra bout of it after tea.

My voice stood out very well, and, as I was kept on for some time drilling the recruits, I suppose I gave satisfaction. But it seemed curious that I

should be *teaching* drill only six months after I had been myself a recruit.

Besides the change of work, there was another advantage in my move—viz. that at Fort Grange we had a sergeants' mess. It was not kept up in the same style as when the regiment was all together, for we had only six dining members; but it made a vast difference to me, having my meals out of the barrack-room, and being able to get beer without using the canteen.

I had to spend my Easter in barracks, *i.e.* I could not get away for a night. I put in a pass for the whole of Easter day, and got to church quietly in Gosport, with an old college friend, who was a curate there. He also give me dinner and the free use of his rooms, so I was not so badly off after all; but I had hoped to get away for two or three days, as there is generally a slack time about Easter.

The only incidents worthy of remembrance about this time were a Sunday spent in the Isle of Wight; and on a longer holiday which I managed to get at the end of April or early in May, I succeeded in getting to London, leaving Gosport on Saturday morning, and reaching barracks again on Sunday

night; the time being spent with my brother, who had a house in town for the season.

About April and May, the Colonel was also beginning to work the authorities about my commission; but they said nothing at all could be done until I was promoted full sergeant, and when that event took place they were to be informed. It was also hinted that I might quite possibly be nominated and examined for a commission directly I got the sergeant's stripes. This was most unexpected good news, for a vacancy might occur at any minute, and I knew the Colonel would give me the step. As a proof of what he thought, he gave me a lot of examination papers to read up, so that I might be ready whenever called upon. I also heard from a clerk at the War Office who had been in the —th when I joined, that it was well known there that (bar accidents) I should be very shortly given my commission.

Thus my hopes were raised to a very high pitch, and I began to think myself indeed a favoured child of fortune.

About the 13th of May 1874, the regiment assembled at headquarters, Fort Grange, and the reports being collected from the various detachments,

and one sergeant reported *absent*, no one knowing where he had got to, we proceeded by railway to Aldershot, there to take part in the grand review to be held in honour of the Emperor of Russia, and to remain on for the summer manœuvres.

For a sergeant to be absent from the regiment when leaving its station is a very rare occurrence, and on this occasion it created a good deal of surprise, for the man in question was an old soldier, had been some time a sergeant, and though rather an "old fool" was decidedly steady and generally to be trusted. He had been seen in the fort that very morning, and though at the last moment the adjutant was good enough to send in search of him, he could nowhere be found, and away we went without him.

Arriving at Aldershot, we were met, according to army custom, by the bands of two other regiments, and were duly escorted to our new home in the North Camp. We were to live under canvas, and found our tents already pitched by the friendly 24th regiment. They indeed performed the hospitalities of the station most thoroughly. They invited *the whole regiment* to dinner. The officers went to the mess, the sergeants were entertained by their

brother non-commissioned officers, and all the men by the corresponding companies to which they belonged.

Many people think this style of hospitality is carried too far in our army, but whether it is so or not, I know we all very much appreciated the kindness of the 24th, and had it not been for them, we should have had little to eat that day.

Our lines were close to the North Camp church, on a very sandy spot between the M and O lines of huts, which were occupied by our "hosts." I think I shook down and made myself comfortable sooner than most of my comrades; for I was quite accustomed to tent life, having been out camping with the volunteers, etc., on five occasions previously. I happily got a very fair lot of men in my tent—nine of them—and myself in charge. It is pretty much a piece of luck what men get together, though no doubt an exchange might be effected, if certain "pals" wished to be in the same tent. We had straw served out to us for the bottom of the tents and two blankets apiece. There was a big marquee for the sergeants to sit in; but they were obliged to have their meals with the men, the rations being served out according to "tents." The supply of

meat appeared to be very limited, though I believe the regular ¾ lb. was served out all right. But somehow, owing to the cooking, which had to be done out of doors in regulation camp kitchens, I am sure I had continually to be content with about half-a-dozen mouthfuls of meat per day—the rest of my food being composed of potatoes and bread. Very often, too, the bread was stopped, and biscuits given instead. Altogether I had a very hard time of it. Far more hard work—long marches, and field days, and far less food, and numerous discomforts, which made me look back on my life in barracks as one to be envied. The supply of water was very bad, and, except for occasional bathing parades, I hardly ever got a proper washing—a dreadful contingency, as any one will confess who has seen a regiment marching home from a day's work in the Long Valley!—every man begrimed with dirt, eyes, nose, and ears; the very pores of the skin even filled and stopped up with sand and dust.

There was one thing I was determined to stop while I was thrown so especially into the society of the men, viz. "bad language;" and as soon as ever I and my tent comrades were settled, I informed them that I meant to stop it by simply checking them

myself if that would do, but if it failed I should straightway march them up to the Colonel. The men all promised they would do their best, and it was really wonderful how they succeeded. Of course an oath would occasionally slip out, but by my always checking them at once, they very soon broke themselves off the habit, and at last never (in my presence at least) broke the rule I had imposed. There was one young fellow, a nice simple-minded, high-coloured, country lad, who always looked most penitent when he offended, though he certainly was *only* sorry because he knew "I did not like it" (that being the main argument I used to check their swearing), but at last, in the case of this young countryman, *a look* from me was quite enough if an oath had escaped him to bring him to me with an apology,—"I am very sorry, sergeant, but really I quite forgot."

There is something very romantic about camp life, being one of a large number of men living together in the open air, having so little between one's self and the skies, and yet perfectly snug and warm. Many a time, when an officer with one or two pleasant companions in the tent, I have lain awake at night and revelled in the thought of all

the "comrades in arms" lying around, and then the merry bustle and stir like a swarm of bees when the time comes for turning out in the morning, and the curious mixture of chaff and jokes with orders and bugle sounds, all reaching one's ears at the same time, every sound in camp being so easily heard; and the wonderful freedom of view always obtainable, no walls but the horizon, no ceiling but the clouds or sky: all this is very fascinating.

But it was not for me to enjoy that sort of camp life under my present circumstances: my difficulties and discomforts more than counteracted the romance of my position.

In the first place, sharing a tent with two or three gentlemen friends is a very different matter from being stowed away with nine soldiers, and here at Aldershot it was most difficult to keep one's things clean because of the sandy soil on which our camp was placed. The manner of getting meals was also very uncomfortable, as we had no plates or basins, only the tin canteens, and the badness of the food and the scarcity of water I have mentioned before.

The tents were all kept perfectly clean; there was no litter allowed, no scraps of bread or meat

thrown about, and every one was as careful as possible with the inside of the tent, as any grease or fat spilt would inevitably get on to the straps or belts and give an infinity of trouble to the luckless owner. The straw was kept tidy by being sewn up in one of the blankets, so that we had a very comfortable mattress to lie on, and during the day this was rolled up, and gave the tents a smart appearance.

Although I have confessed to being very uncomfortable, I got on decidedly better than I expected. I had previously quite dreaded the life, but it is a happy knack to make the best of everything, and I think I had my share of that quality.

But there was one very substantial consolation in store for me. The sergeant who had been "absent without leave" when we left Gosport forts, was tried by court-martial and reduced to the ranks, and I was the lucky one to get promoted to his place. On May 18th my name appeared in orders "Corporal (lance-sergeant) . . . . to be sergeant, vice . . . . reduced to the ranks." Sorry as I was for my poor foolish old predecessor, I could not help chuckling over my marvellous good luck. I was now in the position and rank

laid down by the War Office as the one necessary condition to have my case, and the Colonel's application about my commission, taken into consideration. I will here give a *resumé* of my progress, that my quick promotion may be more clearly shown.

Enlisted as private, August 27, 1873.

Appointed lance-corporal, September 27, 1873.

Promoted corporal, December 14, 1873.

Appointed lance-sergeant, February 5, 1874.

Promoted sergeant, May 18, 1874.

In less than nine months, one of which had been spent at home, I had worked up so far that I might expect to be nominated for a commission at any time. I had won the entire sympathy and cordial good-will of my Colonel, and had been favourably noticed by the authorities. Well might I write home, "I suppose this is the beginning of the end."

My first appearance in public with the three gold stripes on my arm was at the big review on May 19th in honour of the Emperor of Russia. It was also my first experience of a long day at Aldershot. We were under arms in "marching order" from 9 A.M. till 4.30 P.M. without a chance of any-

thing to eat except Aldershot sand, of which we had our fill that day.

This does not perhaps sound very hard to sportsmen, but it must be remembered that my breakfast before the parade had been of the lightest character, that tea or "late dinner" the previous evening had been almost *nil*, and that the one meal which in a comfortable sergeants' mess might have been called substantial, had probably consisted, as I have said before, of half-a-dozen mouthfuls of fat stewed mutton. After, or on my way back from this parade, I met my good supporter, Colonel ——— ———, V.C., lately returned from the Gold Coast. He had not forgotten me, and kindly asked leave for me to fall out of the ranks, and we had a good chat. He said he had been talking to my Colonel about me, and that the Colonel had told him "I was getting on very well, but that he had made me work for it."

It would be very monotonous were I to narrate in detail my work at Aldershot. It was continually big parades in the Long Valley, sham fights and long marches. Perhaps one or two specimens may be interesting as showing the length of time we were at work, details being taken from letters written at the time.

Left our camp at 6 A.M., marched out about seven or eight miles—sham fight, got home about 4.30 P.M. We had no meat meal until we were back in camp, having had our breakfast at 5.30. Generally beer was served out during the day, and we carried biscuits with us. After this day's work I had to go on guard, thereby losing my night's rest, which makes a great difference after a long day out of doors.

Sometimes "the orders" for a day's manœuvring are brought out so late, that the orderly-sergeants who have to write down the orders are kept out of bed long after hours. Here is a case. I did not "turn in" until 11.30 or 12, owing to the delay in getting the orders out. I had to be out and about at 2.15 A.M. next day. Tents were struck and put on waggons at 3 A.M. Breakfast at 3.30. Parade formed at 4. We then marched about eight miles—pitched the tents we had brought with us. About 12 we had bread and cheese and beer; at 2.0 struck tents again, fought a battle, and got back to Aldershot at 6.30, having been on the move for sixteen hours, after two and a half hours' rest, and no meat to eat for twenty-eight or thirty hours previously. Orders were late again that night, and the next day we were out for seven hours.

Towards the end of my time at Aldershot we had very hot weather and long marches.

On Monday we had to turn out at 3.45, paraded at 5.30, and marched on, with halts for five minutes occasionally, until 11. We covered in that time sixteen or seventeen miles. We stayed out two nights, packed rather close in our tents, twelve in each. On the Wednesday, amid heavy thunder showers, we marched seven miles, fought a battle, and afterwards had ten miles to walk back to Aldershot, which we reached at 6, having been on parade since 6.30 A.M. No meat (as before) until the day's work was over, but generally bread and cheese and a pint of beer served out once during the day. On the days when biscuits were given, I used to carry my share in my pocket, and eat little bits as I went along, also I had some meat lozenges which gave me a certain amount of support.

On the whole I got through this work very well. I never fell out of the ranks, and except for being very tired—more thoroughly tired out than was quite pleasant, on one or two occasions—I felt quite well, healthy, and happy. I believe one day I was excused parade, as I felt rather giddy and faint while we were being inspected by the adjutant previous to

the parade being formed up; but as I find no mention of it in my letters, and certainly never went before the doctor, it was probably something very slight and soon overcome.

My "holidays" were rather successful at Aldershot. Twice I went up to London for Sundays, once I went to some friends at Sonning. My brother also came to see me, and slept a night, and other friends I saw occasionally, Aldershot being more "in the world" than Gosport Forts; however I was heartily glad when the manœuvres were over and all the battles had been lost and won, and when we marched away from our tents for the last time. It was about the 28th of June that we returned to our old detachments round Portsmouth, and I was luckily ordered to remain at the headquarters, Fort Grange.

CHAPTER VIII.

Soldiers' pay and allowances—Stoppages—Savings banks—Army Reserve pay—Money-lending—Soldiers' talk and quarrels.

BEFORE commencing any account of my doings after my return to the forts, I will touch on a subject, and a very important subject too, which I have made no mention of as yet, viz. "the soldiers' pay."

It is rather awkward to know how to deal with this, because the regulations are so continually altering; but it will probably be more useful for me to detail the state of things existing at the present time, and leave out altogether the older regulations which were in force in 1874. The figures I shall quote will be taken from the latest royal warrant, dated May 1878; and I shall only speak of "infantry of the line." In nearly all cases the cavalry, artillery, and Foot Guards have more pay than the infantry, *e.g.*, a private in Life Guards has 2s. a day, and a gunner R.A., either 1s. 4d. or 1s. 2d.

In the first place, every recruit is given a full complete kit of necessaries, including of course all clothing, shirts, boots, socks, etc. This must be considered as "pay," because for a man, whether destitute of the necessaries of life or not, to be entirely rigged out "like a gentleman," and free of expense is no doubt a great inducement to enlist, and a good deal of money is saved thereby.

A private is credited with pay at 1s. a day. I say "credited" because he never really sees the whole shilling in cash, there being some compulsory deductions made from his pay before it is handed to him. Going up the other grades, the daily pay credited is as follows:—

Lance-Corpl. 1/3.
Corporal . 1/4. After two years as Corporal, 1/5.
Lance-Sergt. 1/11.
Sergeant . 2/1 „ „ „ as Sergeant, 2/3.
Colour-Sergt. 2/7 „ „ „ as Col.-Sergt., 2/9.
Sergt.-Major 3/9.

These sums are the smallest that men in the several ranks mentioned would ever be credited with. The deductions shall be mentioned presently, but first I will show how much men can *add* to their ordinary pay.

Deferred Pay.—This is an addition of 2d. a day to all ranks during the first twelve years of their service, whether with a regiment or in the Army Reserve. It is not paid to any man until he leaves the active service, either for good, or to join the Reserve. In the ordinary course of things a man joins the Reserve after six years' service, by which time the "deferred pay" would have accumulated to £18:5s. So that, even if a man has not saved any money out of his pay, he would have a nice little sum to start him in civil life.

Good Conduct Pay.—All soldiers below the rank of sergeant can earn additional pay by uninterrupted good conduct at the following rates:—

2	years	without	any *serious*	fault,	1d. a day.
6	„	„	„	„	2d. „
12	„	„	„	„	3d. „

For each penny, they wear a badge on the sleeve of the coat, just above the cuff. Good conduct pay is given every week with the other pay.

Working Pay.—This is for work, so often done now by our soldiers, which I have referred to before, such as roadmaking, fortifications, and permanent military works. It is given extra to all

other regimental pay at rates for a day of eight hours, varying from "first rate" at 1s. 4d. to "fifth rate" at 4d. The former is issued to soldiers who are skilled artificers, and the latter is intended merely to compensate for wear and tear of clothing and boots. The intermediate rates of 1s. for ordinary artificers, or 8d. for labourers, might be frequently earned, and would make a great addition to the usual pay.

Extra Duty Pay.—This includes a great number of appointments which are given to deserving and capable non-commissioned officers or privates, such as gymnastic instructors, sergeant cooks, school assistants, clerks in the staff offices, telegraph clerks, etc. etc., all of whom receive rates of pay varying from 6d. to 1s. daily. Officers' servants and grooms generally get about 10s. or 15s. per month, besides clothes, and possibly some perquisites (all the above of course extra to their regimental pay).

All these soldiers who are in receipt of extra duty pay, working pay, or good conduct pay, ought to be able to save a good bit of money, and most of them do so. The regimental savings bank is a great institution, and largely patronised in some

regiments. Interest is given at about 3 per cent on any sum over £1 which remains deposited over one month. There were many men in my company, men of all ranks, who had as much as £10 or £20 in the bank.

I have not any statistics to refer to on this subject, but as far as I can remember there were twenty or five-and-twenty men, *i.e.* a third of the whole company, regular depositors. Even a private with his 1s. a day, and nothing extra, might deposit 10s. a month, provided that he was content with little or no beer.

Now as to "stoppage of pay." All men having their meals in the barrack-room have to contribute to the common fund for groceries, tea, bread, etc.—probably about 3d. or 3½d. a day. Also all soldiers have to pay about 3d. per week for washing of their clothes. Thus privates and corporals have say 4d. a day of their pay stopped. This is the only compulsory stoppage in the ordinary course. But if a man buys a new shirt, or socks, or, in fact, anything out of the stores, the value is stopped out of his pay. If he lost any part of his kit, say a blacking brush, or a cap badge, the same course would be pursued. Again, if a man was fined for

drunkenness, his pay would be stopped (all except 1d. a day might be taken) until the fine was settled. If in hospital, and being given hospital diet, 7d. a day would be deducted from his pay. One of the most serious stoppages a soldier can incur is in the case of his tunic or serge coat being unfit to wear, and the new issue not due. This would take 10s. or £1 out of his pay, but it should never be necessary with ordinary care. Some captains are very strict, and order a man a new coat without any hesitation. The best plan is for every man when he first joins to give a couple of shillings to some comrade for an old coat to do all dirty work in, and keep the yearly issue for special parades. The sergeants who use the sergeants' mess for meals have to pay 6d., or perhaps up to 9d., a day for extra messing. This, also, whatever the sum may be, is a compulsory stoppage.

I will now take a case of what a private might earn, especially with a view of showing how much money might be saved and invested, provided he was a good soldier and good worker, according to what I have stated above; but I don't mean to imply that every man can do the same, only I do say that every man can try for it, and that it is quite within reach.

		Per week. s.	d.
Privates' pay 1s. daily, less 4d. for stoppage on account of washing and messing	8d.	4	8
Good conduct pay, 1d. daily	1d.	0	7
Working pay (we will take it only as third rate, *i.e.* as an ordinary labourer)	8d.	3	4
		8	7

Suppose this latter to be only five days a week, the pay for one week would be 8s. 7d. We will now allow 4d. a day for beer (this would buy a quart at the canteen), also 3d. a day for extras at breakfast, and tobacco—4s. 1d. a week.

This deducted from 8s. 7d. leaves 4s. 6d., after every ordinary expense has been paid, which might be very well invested in the savings bank. However, we will still deduct 1s. 6d. a week for such things as extra clothes, and leave 3s. a week to invest, which comes to about £8 a year. Now, supposing a man earned this rate of pay at different times, off and on for three years, *i.e.* for half his army service, he could save, after a liberal allowance for pocket money, £24, and that added to his six years' deferred pay [as before stated £18] would make a total with which to start in civil life £42, and his "Reserve" pay in addition.

I have not attempted to be accurate, but I think

I have taken a fair case, especially as I have supposed that the private in question only put money in the savings bank during three years.

Perhaps people may question the possibility of any soldier earning working pay during so long a period as half his service with the colours; but as a matter of fact, in places like Portsmouth, in my time, where a great deal of military labour was employed, men were often on the works month after month, their guards even being arranged so as not to interfere with their more remunerative duties. Then it must be noticed that I have only reckoned the third rate of working pay, whereas artificers would get the higher rates of 1s. or 1s. 4d. But besides this working pay, there are many opportunities of earning "extra duty pay," which would be permanent; and taking a low estimate of 6d. a day, this would come to much the same thing, counting six or seven days to the week, as five days' working pay at 8d.

As I consider myself to be below the mark, if anything, in the amount able to be saved by the economical soldier, I would remark again that I have only reckoned three years' saving out of the six, and that as a man can certainly save some

little sum every year, he might almost reckon on being able to accumulate £50 before joining the reserve, if he was bent on doing so.

I will take another case of a lance-corporal, an educated man, we will imagine, and able to do clerk's work. Living in the barrack-room, he will be much in the same case as the private as regards stoppages for messing; but I will allow him a little more for breakfast, extras, etc.—

	Daily.	Weekly. s.	d.
Pay of lance-corporal (less 4d.) . .	11d.	7	0
Good conduct pay . . .	1d.		
Staff clerk at 1s. a day . . .	1s. 0d.	6	0
Total . . .		13	0
Deduct for beer and extras, per week . .		5	0
		8	0

Still deduct 2s. a week for pocket money, and a thrifty lance-corporal might save and invest at the rate of 6s. per week, or £15 a year.

I must again say that I do not pretend to have taken an every-day case, but merely to show that the army has its rewards for those even of the lowest grades who are able and willing to work for them. One more case may be interesting, viz.—of a

man with the lowest possible pay, and no extra money of any sort. I will state it in the form of a monthly account:—

PRIVATE THOMAS ATKINS.

Credit—30 days' pay at 1s. . . .				£1	10	0
Expenses—30 days' messing, at 4d.	£0	10	0			
30 days' beer, at 4d. . .	0	10	0			
30 days' tobacco and extras, at 2d.	0	5	0			
Blacking, pipeclay, etc. . .	0	0	4			
Subscription to Library (Recreation-room) .	0	0	2			
Chance expenses out of stores .	0	2	6			
Deposited in Savings Bank .	0	2	0			
				£1	10	0

Two shillings per month, or £1 : 4s. a year, is not much to invest, certainly; but if he was anxious to save, he might, perhaps, do with a penny a day less for the two items beer and extras, which would give £1 : 10s. a year extra for the bank. A teetotaller could of course save much more.

Now, as I have remarked before, great numbers of soldiers do save, and remembering that the deferred pay will certainly come to him (except he has lost it by gross misbehaviour, desertion, discharge with ignominy, etc.) at the time of his leaving the colours and joining the Reserve, he might have added at least £1 a year to his £18 deferred pay,

and so make a good start in civil life with £25 in his pocket. But even here he is not left unsupported, for still he can draw from the public purse 6d. a day, or £9 : 2 : 6 a year as long as he remains in the Army Reserve, which will probably be for six years.

To complete this subject, I should add that if an Army Reserve man is recalled to the colours, he receives pay the same as the other soldiers in the regiment. If he has a wife and children, the former is given 6d. a day, the latter 2d. a day each. Now, supposing a soldier to have a wife and two children; perhaps it will be said, "What a miserable pittance, 5s. 10d. a week, and the father called to fight for his country." No doubt it is a small sum; but where is the £9 a year which has been drawn, avowedly for the purpose of providing against this emergency? As an unmarried man he might spend it as soon as paid, but with a wife it is the duty of a soldier, equally with a civilian, to save for a time of difficulty; and the regulations of the service put it easily in his power, quite apart from what he may earn at his trade.

The amount to be drawn from will, of course, depend upon the number of years he has been in

the Reserve *without* being called out. If called out in the first year of his reserve service it will be very little. But, supposing the soldier to have saved and invested his £9 a year, and supposing him to be engaged for a whole year in active service, leaving a wife and family at home, he will have the following sums to add to the 5s. 10d. mentioned above as given to a wife and two children. If called out after one year in the Reserve, and kept for a whole year on active service, he can draw 3s. 6d. a week from his bank. After two years in the Reserve he can afford 7s. a week. After three years, 10s. 6d., and so on, continuing this supplementary payment for a year.

Supposing the Reserve man to have saved for six years, and not to be called out, he has a nice sum of £50 laid by for sickness or old age. I think I have now said enough on this subject. It is a question often raised as to whether our army is paid sufficiently or not. In my opinion, the pay of privates is ample, considering the class from which they come. I do not believe they ought to be trusted with more money. They are very young when they enlist, and have much more temptation to spend and waste money than their civilian

brothers. Then, supposing a man to be worthy of it, there are very many opportunities of increasing his pay, as I have shown.

But I think it is quite possible that men may have to be tempted by a larger income to enlist from a better class, purposely to become non-commissioned officers.[1] As short service becomes more popular, good sergeants will become more scarce; and it might be feasible to enlist a superior stamp of man, for the distinct object of making him a non-commissioned officer after a short probation in the ranks, in which case a higher rate of pay would be necessary. In comparing the position, as regards money, of soldiers and civilians, the following points must be borne in mind in favour of the former. The free ration of bread and meat, comfortable lodgings also free, boots and cloth clothes every year, education if necessary, and a good hospital. 2dly, The certainty of all the above; 3dly, As a private, plenty of spare time; 4thly, A holiday or furlough of one month a year, with full pay all the time, and an extra sixpence a day in lieu of the free ration.

As regards myself and my pay, I never went in for saving my sixpences, and investing in the regi-

[1] I have referred to this question again later on.

ment's saving bank. I drew my money regularly, and spent it, and had a private store besides in the P. O. Savings Bank. But among other curious experiences, I might mention that on one occasion I was absolutely without money for about a week. It was while I was in Gosport Forts, and I had not a penny to buy myself a bit of butter for breakfast, or a postage stamp for my letters home. I happened to run short just at the time that I was on duty as orderly-sergeant. I had money in the Post-Office Bank in Portsmouth, but I could not get out of barracks to draw it; and it so happened that there was no pay-day.

When first I joined, the men, knowing that I had money to spare, used to ask me to lend them a shilling or two, promising to refund it me on the next pay-day. It seemed to me rather hard that if a man was in want of a shilling or so, I should not comply with his request, provided it was for any good purpose. But there is a strict rule in the army that soldiers are not to lend to one another. So on several occasions I told a man who asked to borrow from me, that I was not able to comply with his request, it being contrary to regulations, but that I would give him something to help him in his difficulty, etc.

After a bit I found that my "kind consideration" was likely to be sadly abused; for perhaps a man, who had already taken as much beer as was good for him, would come to me and say—"Please to give me a shilling, corporal; I wouldn't think to ask you to lend me anything, because it's '*contrairy*' to orders." So the natural consequence of that style of conduct was that I made a rule never to lend or give. And my comrades left off very soon trying to get money from me. But once in the earlier days a man belonging to my room had got a small sum of money from me (a shilling or eighteenpence), and when it came to bedtime he was decidedly the worse for liquor, though not drunk enough to be put in the guard-room as a prisoner. I was naturally very much put out at this; for I should not have given the man a penny, unless he had made me think it was for some reasonable purpose. However, in the end, I believe it did him good, as it certainly did me; for the next day, when he was quiet, or perhaps feeling rather uncomfortable, I had a long talk to him about it, impressing upon him that he had treated me shamefully after my kindness to him, to go and get tipsy on my money when he knew I hated it; and that of course now

I could never help him nor any one else, even if they really wanted it, etc. etc.; until at last I believe the poor old fellow was quite grieved for his misbehaviour.

It often occurred to me as a curious thing that the soldiers allowed me to talk to them in the way I did—laying down rules of right and wrong, and principles of conduct, quite at variance with what they generally heard, or saw practised. For, apart from the fact of my being a very young soldier, and very young in appearance also, I was not one of themselves at all, but always behaved as an outsider. Probably the whole secret of their wonderful treatment of me, great consideration for me, and general acquiescence in my views or decision on any subject, was the well-known fact that the British soldier will always follow and appreciate "an English gentleman." But it was immensely to their credit that they would do so when the gentleman was really one of themselves in army rank and position.

I may have said before that the soldiers were inclined to be reserved in my presence, at any rate they were so in their conversation to me, unless I set to work to draw them out. But of course I have heard much of their talk to one another, and

understood a good deal of their opinions. I remember many most amusing discussions which took place in very subdued tones after "Lights out." At one time two soldiers, who had adjacent cots, regularly every night discussed the Tichborne trial. They held exactly opposite views, and were most eager to forward their own ideas; some of the pleadings on either side being highly entertaining. Soldiers frequently discuss their own or their comrades' punishments, very often foretelling accurately what amount of imprisonment will be given, using the curious expression, that "So-and-so is *entitled* to forty-two days;" or, "I am *entitled* to a five-shilling fine!"

I have often heard old soldiers say that flogging ought to be reintroduced—that it was the only punishment that would cure certain characters of their evil ways; and I certainly agree to that myself. The accumulation of fines and imprisonment is not at all the way to improve the black sheep of the army. But the Government and British public have decided differently.

Another very ordinary topic among soldiers is that of their officers—almost always respectful in matter. The nicknames most of the officers acquired

are rather amusing; and I think it is more frequent to hear their good qualities praised, or their peculiarities laughed at, than to hear any blame attached, or spiteful language used.

But it was strange to me at first to find out how soon quarrels would arise on most trivial subjects, apparently between men perfectly friendly, simply from not knowing the effect that would be produced by their words, and thus leading one another on until there would be a regular row, sometimes even ending in a fight. I can give an instance in point, and though of course I cannot remember the actual words that passed, I can vouch for the main points, as the scene occurred in my presence.

I was sitting on my cot letter-writing one evening, and two soldiers were on a bench by the fire, smoking and "yarning," and apparently the best of friends. The following conversation took place, or something like it.

A. You're right, Bill; but do you remember that time we moved to Dover?

B. Ah! and well I do; that was a good while ago now, it was in 1865.

A. Yes, Bill, 'twas some time ago; but you'd be nearer the mark if you said 1866.

B. Now, didn't I just say we moved to Dover in 1865?

A. And don't I say, you weren't right?

B. Well I was there just as much as you, and I expect I can remember just as well.

A. If you can't remember better than that, I am sorry for you.

B. Well, I tell you it was '65.

A. And I tell you it wasn't.

B. You had better call me a liar at once then.

A. And if I did I shouldn't be far wrong.

B. Take a better man than you to prove it, anyhow.

A. Prove it? I'll prove it.

B. Come on and try then.

And so they did, and actually began a fight on the simple question as to the date of a certain move of the regiment. Of course such arguments seldom ended so badly as the above, but men continually lost their tempers over mere trifles. Later on in my service, when I had some influence with the men, I used to be able to stop a good deal of such dangerous talk; and I find in one of my letters that actually while the letter was being written, I stopped a fight, which was brewing in much the

same way as that described above. But it took some time and experience to know how any particular discussion would end; in fact, it was necessary to be well acquainted with the characters of the disputants, so as not to interfere too soon, for any unnecessary interference would have been very bad.

The sergeants in the mess used often to wrangle about mere trifles, but had more command of their tempers, and even they used sometimes to come to me for the solution of some vexed question.

People have often asked me what the sergeants thought of the prospect of my being (almost for certain) promoted over their heads; for as I have stated elsewhere, it was well known that, "bar accidents," I should be given a commission. It has been suggested that they must have been jealous of me, and that they might justly remark that "they having been in the regiment longer than me, ought to be given commissions before me."

There is no idea more erroneous than that all sergeants are anxious for commissions. Can it be imagined that a man of the class our recruits come from, would be comfortable in gentlemen's society, and having to conform to "society manners"? Again, how is it possible that a man without any

private means, or well-to-do friends, could even pay his way in an officer's mess? and all sergeants that I ever met fully appreciate these obstacles to their promotion, and "commissions as combatant officers" is not the least the form their aspirations would take. My impression is that of all the military positions they know about, that of "canteen sergeant" is the one most to their fancy; or perhaps that of the "master gunners," whom we used to find comfortably housed in the Gosport Forts, taking charge of the stores. Then the more ambitious entertain hopes of becoming quartermasters, but I do not believe there was a man of any rank in the —th during my time who would have taken a commission as sub-lieutenant if it had been offered to him. I remember well a young sergeant saying to me one day, "We all know what you are, and that you will get your commission right enough, and I hope you will with all my heart, for there is not one of us would stand in your way. What should we want of commissions?"

Curiously, the only man that did not take it quietly was a sergeant of some standing. He was such a regular blustering, self-conceited fellow, that he was almost unbearable to his brother sergeants,

and I heard (second-hand) that he had remarked in the sergeants' mess one day, that "he didn't see why he shouldn't have a commission just as much as . . . . What had that young fellow done so wonderful?" But I believe there were plenty of other sergeants present who took my side and gave him what was termed a very "straight" answer. There was a still more curious coincidence of the same nature later on,—in fact, after I had passed my examination for a commission. It took place at a sergeants' dance at Gibraltar. Much against my inclination I went to it, being pressed so to do as a sort of parting exhibition of myself. However, I got through a fair amount of dancing, smoking, and drinking, and having made myself civil to all the "swells," came away before the dance was over with a comfortable feeling of having done my duty. I was living at this time in a hut with one other sergeant, junior to me, and rather a fast-going young fellow. He also was at the dance, and remained till the end. When I saw him next morning, I at once discovered he had been fighting. I was afraid he had got into some serious trouble, but on inquiry I learnt that after I left the dance, there had been a good deal of talk about me—that this same

sergeant (referred to above) had given vent to some expressions hostile to me, and after the usual "compliments" had been exchanged, my young friend challenged the other to fight it out, because he wasn't going to hear me run down for nothing; and it seems they set to work just outside the "ball-room" there and then—though no doubt it was soon stopped.

Notwithstanding these incidents, I believe no one was really envious of my coming commission; but there may have been some irritation at my quick promotion through the non-commissioned officers' grades; and it is easy to imagine isolated instances of a nasty feeling of jealousy at the good luck of a comrade. At the risk of repetition, I must defend myself and my Colonel, by adding here, that as concerns my promotions to corporal and sergeant, I was presumably the best man to be given the steps, for I had shown myself quick at drill, and able to instruct, and moreover held Army School certificates superior to any others of my rank.

CHAPTER IX.

At Fort Grange again—Extra hard work—To a sergeant's wedding—Inspection by the Crown Prince of Prussia—First-class school certificate.

I MUST now return to the narrative of my own proceedings, which I broke off some time ago, just after my hard time at the Aldershot manœuvres; and on my return to Fort Grange, I was luckily ordered again to the Headquarter Fort, so that I had the advantage of a sergeants' mess for meals, which was extremely welcome after the long time we had been "messing it" under canvas, and eating all our food with a goodly mixture of Aldershot sand.

It was just about this time (July 1874) that my bright prospects began to fade. I never found out exactly why it was, but, whatever the cause, I had to suffer for it; and the hopes held out to me so distinctly at Aldershot in May and June were never realised; and, on the contrary, I now began gradually to understand that my commission would be post-

poned almost indefinitely, at any rate till the beginning of the next military year, which is in April, and probably for two or three years. My friends went through a good deal of trouble for me about this time, especially to find out what caused the sudden change in the minds of the authorities; and I believe it was pretty well proved that some one tried to invent difficulties. One statement made about me was that "I was obliged to leave college and enlist, because I could not pass my examinations!" Another foolish argument used was to the effect that I must be given £100 when I got my commission, and that the War Office could not afford it.

Of course, these difficulties were easily got over, but not so the official verdict which had apparently been given against me; and so I had to put up with what was a real disappointment to me, and I had to make up my mind to "wait;" this being all the harder to do, as my expectations had been so much raised previously.

One good thing was that I had not much spare time to brood over my troubles. I had done some hard work of one sort at Aldershot, now I was in for hard work of another, or, I might say, of many sorts.

We were under orders for "foreign service," and the establishment of the regiment had to be raised by 200 men or more. Fort Grange was full of recruits, and, in consequence, nearly all the duty soldiers (*i.e.* old hands) were drafted off to other forts. There were, nominally, three companies at Headquarters, but I had only six men to do ordinary duty out of the whole of my company; and another detail, which I take from a letter of July 12, shows that I was returning daily on my "parade state" eleven sergeants and nine corporals, and that out of that number I was the *only one* doing the routine non-commissioned officer's work. These facts would prove conclusively, to a military mind, the miserable state in which the companies were jumbled up, and the great amount of extra "friction" consequent throughout the machinery of the regiment. Every corporal or sergeant had to do his own work, and that of three or four others at the same time. As soon as one job was over, we had to take up something else; and what with this breaking up of routine, and the extra worry of being swamped with recruits, I am sure I had no peace morning, noon, or night.

To give some specimens of my work at this time, I would mention various distinct duties,—that

is to say, duties which ought to have been done by different persons,—which I had to take at the same time. I was partly drilling recruits, which gave me four really hard hours. After that was done I had to take over the duties of barrack-sergeant, which I have explained before as having to do with all defaulters, keeping them in barracks, drill them, or superintend their extra fatigue work, etc.; and besides these, I had to do duty as orderly-sergeant. This last was, in fact, a standing dish for me for many weeks; in ordinary times, to be doing orderly-sergeant *alternate weeks*, was considered rather hard, but during the months of July and August, I thought myself lucky to get a week off.

Although I had a great friend staying at Portsmouth for five weeks, I could not find time to get in to see him; and I was unable to leave the fort, even for five minutes, from the 10th to the 21st July, except on Sunday evening for an hour to go to church.

During all these weeks, the hours of duty each day were very long. We used to turn out at 5.30 every morning, and be kept on "the go" pretty well till 10.30 at night; and no doubt the work seemed harder, as the weather was very hot.

I can quote another instance of long extra hours about the beginning of August. I had to march a mile and a half to the sea for bathing parade, and back before breakfast. Then a lot of orderly-sergeant's work till 11 A.M. At that time I should, in ordinary cases, have had an hour's rest, but instead of rest I had to attend a court-martial, which involved a lot of running about, and lasted till 4.30 P.M. After that I was ordered off to Portsmouth on duty, not getting back till 8 P.M., when, of course, I had to make up arrears of orderly-sergeant's work. That court-martial went on the next day also; and in the two days it gave me twelve hours' work entirely extra to my proper duties.

Meanwhile, of course, "guard-work" was still going on, and I find I was on guard one night each week, making a decided aggravation of my troubles, as the scenes mentioned previously were of frequent occurrence at this time.

The only sign I showed of having too much work and worry was, that I had to leave parade one day. I felt a slight attack of giddiness, which prevented my going on with the drill, so I asked leave to fall out for a few minutes and get a rest. I went off to a shady place, and lying down under

a furze bush, took off my chako, with which to make a pillow for my head, and in a minute had dropped sound asleep. I had chosen a spot near the road which the regiment would march along as it returned to barracks, meaning then, if not sooner, to rejoin my company. However, after lying down, the next thing I remembered was some one shaking me violently. The regiment had marched away, the band playing, within twenty or thirty yards of my couch, without my being in any way disturbed in my peaceful sleep; and it was only by chance that a soldier in a fort close by the drill-ground had seen me, and come to see what was the matter. Directly on waking, I felt all right, and walked home to Fort Grange, two or three miles off, all the better for my nap. During my two months' hard work in July and August, my "holidays" were, of course, very few and far between. I think, in fact, that they were represented by two Sundays spent on "pass," — one in the Isle of Wight and one at Fawley. Besides these, my brother came to Portsmouth to see me, but that proved rather a failure, as my work kept me in barracks too much. I also had a festivity of rather an amusing nature, being invited to the wedding of a young

sergeant in the regiment. He was a very smart fellow in many ways, and had gained the affections of the pretty school-teacher; and it pleased me much to be asked to take part in his rejoicings. Besides this, I may add that it is a good instance for showing the very friendly terms I was on with my brother non-commissioned officers, for there were only four or five other sergeants invited.

I could only spare time in the afternoon, so I joined the festive party after "their breakfast." There was a good deal of smoking going on, and plenty of spirits and other liquors on the table. The bride and her friends present all the while, and much to my embarrassment, I was given the place of honour on the sofa next to her. However, I did my best to suit myself to the customs of my hosts, and, inwardly chuckling at my monopoly of the bride, made myself as agreeable as I could!

The only other excitement worth referring to was an inspection of the regiment in an absolutely private manner by the Crown Prince of Prussia. He was staying at the time in the Isle of Wight, and I fancy had some previous acquaintance both with our Colonel and our senior major. Doubtless he had seen many big reviews at Aldershot

and elsewhere in England, but he wished to see the working of a *single* regiment, and chose the —th for that purpose. He and the small "staff" were on foot the whole time, and walked in and out of the companies, and followed the skirmishers, etc., making the whole business (of which we were very proud) appear very "friendly." Our Colonel was well known at that time as a supporter of the advanced style of drill, which is now of course much more common, and our men carried out his ideas very well, giving general satisfaction to everybody. The Crown Prince seemed especially impressed with the ceremony of taking the colours off parade. We always made a great point of this, and it had a very pretty effect. After all drill was over, and the regiment was formed ready to be dismissed, the men were made to "shoulder arms," and the command was given, "March off the colours," upon which the colour party, consisting of two officers, one for each colour, with a sergeant between them, and three other sergeants or corporals behind them, stepped out of the line, and proceeded to the place where the colours were kept. The officers hoisted the colours, carrying them upright in front of their faces, and the sergeants, acting as

escort, had fixed swords or bayonets, making a very pretty little group. While they were marching off, the band played "God save the Queen," and the regiment was not dismissed until the colours were out of sight.

The Crown Prince also went all round the barracks inspecting some "kits," etc. etc.; also he saw some dinners, and in fact all the interior arrangements. In one room which he went into he found some very young soldiers, and began talking to them in a friendly way, and at last took off his helmet or cap and put it on a recruit's head, and put the recruit's chako on his own head, saying, "Would you like to change with me? at any rate it is not every one can say they have had my hat on!"

This inspection took place on August 17th, and in remembrance thereof there is a magnificent photograph of the Prince, with his signature attached, hanging in the officer's mess.

We were expecting to leave England for Gibraltar about the end of September, and so I determined to make a push for a few days' leave of absence, and although I really hardly expected to be able to get it, it so turned out that the 5th of September

did see me once more on my way home for ten days' rest, and very welcome it was after the busy time of the past four months.

On my return to Fort Grange I found work much easier. I suppose the companies were getting together again in preparation for the move to Gibraltar, now drawing very close. To show the difference of the amount of duty now to what it had been, I noticed in a letter shortly after my return that, according to the number of sergeants at ordinary duty, I should only have to go on guard once a fortnight, and be orderly-sergeant one week in every four or five—a very different state of things from what it had been during July and August.

I forgot to mention before that I had to sit for a first-class army school certificate. It was the Colonel's wish that I should take this certificate, but I told him I really thought the Oxford "testamurs" and the B.A. degree were ample proof of my educational fitness for a commission. This first-class certificate was not necessary for any sergeant to take, except those wishing to get commissions. As a matter of fact, no sergeant in the regiment, and only one corporal and one private, had taken the certificate. I believe my comrades

were rather surprised at my getting it so easily, for I did not do any reading for it. The examination consisted of reading prose and poetry fluently and intelligently. Writing "dictation," difficult English, and, as far as I remember, two mistakes constituted "a pluck;" also there was a subject given on which to write an official letter. The whole of arithmetic had to be taken, including square and cube roots, problems, etc., besides various military branches of "summing," such as soldiers' monthly accounts, savings bank accounts, etc. etc.

The above, as far as I recollect, was all that was necessary to pass in at one time, but before the "first class" was complete an extra subject had to be taken up, either algebra, Euclid, a modern language, or some form of applied mathematics. As I wanted to get it over as soon as possible, I took up three books of Euclid at the same time as the other examination. I forget when the examination took place, but it must have been during my busy time in August, for when I returned from my holiday I found my certificate awaiting me.

There is very little indeed to speak of during the week that elapsed before our embarkation. We were packing up, cleaning up, and settling up our

affairs generally. Little or no drill took place, work was tolerably easy, though very irregular, and made more so by the regiment being divided into so many detachments—a bad plan, and a great nuisance when an important move was so close at hand.

CHAPTER X.

Life on board a troopship.

I MUST now give a short account of my experiences on board a troopship, which was certainly the climax of all my discomforts. I do not doubt but that many English gentlemen have (as sportsmen) in their ordinary life gone through disagreeables as great as anything I have described, so far, *e.g.*, coal-carrying, fatigue-duties, long marches, camping-out, etc., but I should think it falls to the lot of very few to experience such a six days as I had on the lower troop deck of the "Euphrates." When first I heard that the regiment was under orders for Gibraltar, I half made up my mind that I would try and get sent to the depôt, so as to avoid the horrors of the troopship; but I soon resolved to stick to it at all costs, and in this, as in other things, by preparing myself for the worst, I got through the hard times better than I had dared to expect.

To return for a moment to our last night in Fort Grange, I must say that as we had to make an early start in the morning, all the bedding and even the blankets were taken away from us, and returned into the store the day before. Sleeping on bare boards, not even having the luxury of a "guard-bed," was not a good preparation for the coming voyage, but I should confess that somehow or other, almost by stealth, I got hold of a blanket in which I rolled myself, and passed the night on the floor of the sergeants' mess. On such occasions every man looks out for himself, and the best man wins!

The next morning, Saturday, September 26th, everything was a scramble; no inducement to lie in bed, or dawdle over breakfast, for there was nothing of the one and very little of the other. We paraded at 8.30 A.M., marched straight into Portsmouth dockyard, and formed up in line alongside the ship. Here we were inspected by the General of the district, all lucifer matches, etc., were taken away from us, and everything being reported "correct," a sergeant of the marines commenced at the right of the line, and told us off into sections or "messes" of fourteen men and a non-commissioned officer, each

mess being given a number (mine was 71), which showed what part of the ship it was to occupy.

It was an anxious moment to learn where No. 71 was to find its home. First we marched on to the "main troop-deck," a grand open space running the greater part of the length of the ship outside the "state apartments," and bountifully supplied with large ports and square windows, which could be thrown open in fair weather, and give plenty of fresh air and light. The expectations raised at the sight of these comfortable quarters were soon crushed, as we passed on rapidly down a dark "companion" to the "lower troop-deck." This was a very different-looking place to the last described, right forward in the bows of the ship, only lighted by very small round port-holes or bulls' eyes of glass, which could never be opened, and only supplied with fresh air artificially brought down through the upper decks by means of canvas windsails. After some little trouble, "No. 71" was discovered on the starboard side and well in the forward part of the deck. The space allotted to the fifteen men of the mess, comprised that occupied by a table about two feet wide, and the forms on either side of it, and about twelve feet in length.

A fair idea of the size of the new home allotted to me and my fourteen comrades may be gathered by imagining the following measurements—five or six feet along the side of the ship representing the width of table and two forms, twelve to fourteen feet towards the centre of the ship, from the side, representing length of table and forms, seven feet vertical from deck to ceiling. These were the day arrangements; the changes effected at night will be described presently.

The only place for keeping our kits, knapsacks, etc., was an open space under the ceiling, in fact, a sort of sham ceiling formed of wooden bars, some of which were made to slide out, and the horrid mess all our things got into, and the difficulty of finding one's own property at all, was truly painful to the methodical British soldier.

On first getting on board about noon, our rifles were all stowed away, and then we found dinner ready for us, consisting of excellent Australian meat, and cold potato powder, besides bread and a pint of first-rate porter.

The general plan of the ship as regards the troop's quarters was something like the following:—On the lower troop-deck two companies of the —th, and

large drafts of recruits for various other regiments. These latter were a continual source of annoyance to me. I had no authority over them, and they used abominable language, and were thieves into the bargain.

On the upper or main troop-deck, the rest of the —th; the married men all slinging their hammocks in one part, and nearest to the women's quarters. On this deck were also the lavatories, and a canteen for sale of bread and groceries, but no liquor.

Raised above this deck, or more correctly above the outside parts of it, was a wide gangway, connecting the quarter-deck with the forecastle. One side of this was reserved exclusively for the women and children, with a private "companion" leading to their quarters, and the other side and part of the forecastle were left for the troops to exercise themselves and for parades.

I cannot describe the arrangement of the ship for the officers, etc., but there is no doubt of these Indian troopships being about the most magnificent vessels afloat, and so probably the accommodation provided for the officers was pretty good. On the occasion I am writing of now, we must have carried at least a thousand rank and file, besides women and

children, officers and their families, and the ship's crew extra.[1] I went on board the "Serapis," sister ship to the "Euphrates," when she was fitted out for the Prince of Wales on his Indian trip, and it was like wandering about a splendid castle.

What I suffered from most during my short trip, was the stifling heat and stuffiness of the lower troop-deck, the continual crowding in every part of the ship that we had anything to do with, more especially the companion ladders and the lavatories, sometimes it being real hard work to force one's way up and down; and as I have said before the bad language of the recruits with us, and also the sailors. Without any wish to run down the "sister service," I must say they were infinitely worse in the use of bad language than anything I have ever heard before or since, and I have no hesitation in saying that in my regiment such a state of things would soon have been put down most promptly by the non-commissioned officers.

My especial duties on board were to command a "guard" of about fifty men. I had under me a lance-sergeant and two corporals. The guard was

[1] I have lately seen an estimate that the Indian troopers carry an average of 1600 persons each trip.

divided into four reliefs, so that we all remained on guard the whole voyage—the men going on sentry for two hours, and remaining off for six hours. One of the non-commissioned officers was specially attached to each relief; having to post the sentries and visit them, to see they were carrying out their orders.

My hours of being on deck were from 4 to 6 P.M., from 12 midnight to 2 A.M., and from 8 to 10 A.M. Besides these particular hours, of course I had general responsibility for the whole guard; and for any prisoners there might happen to be in the ship. The work could hardly be considered hard, but it was a nuisance having to turn out of one's hammock *every* night at 12 o'clock, as it so completely broke into one's rest.

The prisoners' room, cells, etc., were on the same level as the lower troop-deck, but more forward, in fact quite in the bows of the ship, and the only entrance was through the lower troop-deck; the guard occupied the space nearest to the prisoners, which I suppose accounted for my getting such bad quarters.

I considered that the rations supplied to us were very good. We had bread and biscuit on alternate days, and good meat, such as Australian beef, and

preserved vegetables. The tea and porter were most excellent, and it was on these, or what bread or biscuit I could carry in my pocket, that I subsisted during the six days we were at sea. I could not bring myself to sit down and eat a proper meal in the noisy mob on the steaming and stuffy lower deck; for the deck was at meal-times quite at its worst. I found it was my only chance to fill my pockets with biscuits, drink off my allowance of tea or porter, and return to the upper deck. It was only natural that I should not have much appetite the first day or two; but after that, when I got into rude sea-health, I could not face my meals in the place appointed, and so I had to go without.

Our hours were regulated as follows:—

Turn out of our hammocks at 4.30 or 5 A.M.

Breakfast a little before 7.

Dinner at 12, and tea at 4.

"Turn in" at 8.30 P.M.

The greater part of the men had hammocks, but not all. There were no mattresses or pillows allowed; and only one blanket. I had used a hammock all my time at Oxford, so was well up to all the dodges of making myself comfortable, but I had been accustomed to the luxury of mattress, pillow, two or

three blankets and sheets; and was rather taken aback at the idea of being limited to one solitary blanket. However, it was not half so bad as it appeared at first sight.

The real discomfort of the night arrangements was the close packing. The hammocks had to be hung so near together, that they all touched one another; and when the ship rolled they rubbed against each other. Then besides the men in the hammocks there were others sleeping on the floor; or on "the beds," as the correct expression is. The "beds" were not actually the deck, but a sort of second floor, raised six inches or so above the deck, and made by some arrangement of unhooking the tables and benches (before described) and lowering them down all to one level. Thus in our lower troop-deck there were two tolerably compact layers of men sleeping one above the other, the only relief being when one of the companies, or better still, the recruits, were "on watch" on deck. Under these conditions it is not much wonder that the most enjoyable part of the night was my two hours on deck; and perhaps one of the worst experiences my nose ever went through, was the return to my sleeping apartment after the fresh Atlantic breezes

enjoyed from 12 to 2. I am afraid the confession I am now going to make will prove that I was becoming what soldiers call a "schemer" or "an old soldier;" for in the course of my regular duties I had to see that the prisoners were properly cared for, that their room was clean, etc., and I found out that they were infinitely better off than I was, in my quarters. There was a fine large space, able to accommodate, I suppose, fifty prisoners, and we had only about six or eight on board, and some of them were in the cells; and so to avoid the closeness and noise which I ought to have endured, I moved my hammock to the prisoners' room, and took up my abode there, often sitting there in the day-time, and enjoying a clear swing for my hammock at night. If only I could have had my meals there, I should have thought myself in clover. The "prisoners' room" was right in the bows of the ship, in fact nothing between it and the stem except a cupboard or store-room. The consequence was that there was a good deal of motion there, and the noise of the good ship plunging into the waves was rather alarming until I got used to it; but then at that distance forward I entirely escaped the trembling and rumbling of the engines which "the swells" at the other extremity

of the ship no doubt suffered from; and on the whole I suspect I was best off in that respect, for there is nothing worse in my opinion than the sound of the throbbing strokes of the screw, only broken into by the sudden whirl, or "sallying," when in rough weather it comes out of the water altogether. A cabin near the screw is much better avoided, and even apart from that the first-class travellers hardly ever escape the sound of the engines—whereas I, in my prisoners' room, might have fancied myself in a sailing ship.

Of course with such a number of soldiers on board all orders are given and hours regulated by bugle-call, and all the arrangements and regulations are laid down with great precision, but in our short trip to the Mediterranean they were not carried out at all according to the letter or spirit. For instance, any one reading the rules about the lavatories would certainly have thought that every man could make sure of a tolerable wash every day; but so far from that, it was a trial of physical force to get anywhere near the door at the allotted times—and once inside, there was such a mob of bare-armed soldiers that there was not even elbow-room to make use of the small supply of water. I said

before that all lucifer matches were taken away when we went on board, but smoking was allowed at certain times, there being a sort of slow match of rope in certain places for us to light our pipes from. The signal for "smoking time" was the bugle-call, "commence firing"—very appropriate it was, and always hailed with a roar of delight from the devotees of the fragrant weed. "Cease firing" was the signal for pipes out. When we had been two or three days on board, and men's spirits began to rise, there was a good deal of pleasant chaff (not with me or against me, as I have said many times), and the very most trivial occurrence was greeted with delight as something to make a noise about or a joke at. A small bird like a lark flew round the ship one day while we were in the Bay, and there was a perfect scream from all the "boys" on deck—much as is raised by a party of farmers and country bumpkins engaged in "sport," when a rabbit unexpectedly jumps up under their noses. The same excitement took place whenever a big wave came by, or when a longer roll than usual sent some one staggering across the deck. Without (I hope) being very wearisome, I will just run through some of the incidents of the voyage taken from the inevitable

"log," which even under my trying circumstances I managed to write.

Having got all hands on board on Saturday, September 26th, we lay in the dock all night, and at about 8.30 A.M. on Sunday we began to steam ahead, finding beautiful weather in the Channel. There was a good deal of duty of various sorts, and, except for an evening service in the saloon at 6.30, it was not much like a Sunday at all. The drafts of recruits being on watch during the night, we had more space and air below, and a more comfortable sleep in consequence.

On the Monday we practised "fire stations," and later on in the day one of my sentries, whom I happened to catch away from his post, was given confinement *in cells* until we reached Gibraltar, and three days' low diet. His excuse was that there was such a mob, he thought he wouldn't be missed, and just stepped down to get his tea. (The poor fellow made a mistake for once, and had to pay the penalty.)

Tuesday being rather rough, I succumbed to the landsman's fate. The lower deck a terrible sight.

Wednesday 30th.—Passed Cape Finisterre—got in for the tail end of a stiff gale, and rough cross

sea, but I had my sea legs on at last, and did not suffer; but it must have been very severe weather close by us, as we passed two or three ships running before the gale; one brig under bare poles. It was very wild all day and the beginning of the night, and I avoided the lower deck as much as possible. I heard that after the men had "turned in" about 9 P.M. (the ship rolling a good bit), some of the men got very frightened—one recruit burst into tears, and several began saying their prayers, thus fulfilling the old proverb, "If you wish to teach a man to pray, send him to sea."

Thursday, October 1st.—Warm as summer—no wind—heavy swell. Had a parade in "heavy marching order"—a great trial to the smart soldier.

In the first place, it was almost impossible to find the proper accoutrements out of the *débris* collected in the overhead shelves (as described before). Secondly, it was quite impossible to get things anything like clean. Thirdly, when ready "dressed" it was a frightful struggle to get on deck —knapsacks, canteens, and water-bottles, all helping to make the confusion of the crowded companions worse confounded. Where the chief anxiety was to get "on parade" by hook or by crook, no heed

was taken of scratches on the once-beautiful black cartridge pouches, or soiling of the white belts, once so tenderly cared for with virgin pipeclay.

These "marching-order" parades are ordered in the "Queen's regulations," and are no doubt necessary in long voyages to make men look after their kits, but whether such crowding is an absolute necessity remains to be proved. Even after we landed at Gibraltar, numbers of men were without their own property, and I fully believe the drafts of recruits had stolen lots of small articles of kit—such things as "buff-straps," being always useful as razor-strops! and lost clothes-brushes or button-sticks could now be easily replaced!

Friday, October 2d.—Got into the harbour of Gibraltar about mid-day, and landed during the afternoon, finding the weather very hot, more especially after the contrast of the squally days at sea.

Having thus brought my brief cruise in a "trooper" to a successful ending, I will just refer to a very curious impression that was firmly fixed in the minds of some of even the most intelligent of our men, including sergeants. They had an idea that the "Bay" was a sort of strip of absolutely impassable water, or, at any rate, that there was in

"the Bay" some place that no ship had ever or could ever get across! What it was supposed to be like I could never get any one to tell me, but it was reported that once a ship had been chased by privateers, and to escape being taken had preferred to be lost in this awful gulf; also, that the knocking about we had experienced on the Wednesday night was caused by our captain ("who was such a foolhardy man") having tried to force his way over "it," when he ought to have known better with so many men on board, etc. etc.

Such extraordinary ideas do uneducated persons get on subjects of which they know nothing.

CHAPTER XI.

At Gibraltar—In tents at the North Front—Gibraltar described—The Galleries—The key-sergeant at the gate—To the South Barracks—Inefficient state of our regiment—The "work" of Gibraltar—The key-sergeant's duties.

ON Friday afternoon, the 3rd October, we bade good-bye to the "Euphrates," and right glad I was to turn my back on those unpleasant companions of the lower troop-deck—"the recruits who were none of ours"—without them, I believe the trip across "the Bay" would have been far more bearable, I might almost say, far from disagreeable.

We landed in the dockyard (which looked very insignificant as compared with the dockyard we had started from), and after waiting about a bit on the New Mole Parade, we marched through the town beyond the gates leading to Spain, and then found we had to go under canvas, which I must confess was a great disappointment to me, looking forward to the comforts of a soldier's cot; and the place our

tents were pitched on was very unsuitable, although, as I became better acquainted with the natural features of Gibraltar, I discovered that a *suitable* place did not exist.

Our encampment was on the "North Front," a level space beyond the town, and off the "Rock." There were also wooden huts there, forming a permanent camp; but these were occupied by other troops, and our tents were placed between the huts, or rather inside the square formed by the huts. The ground was everywhere soft, and at least two or three inches deep with loose sand. How the tents could stand was a wonder, and I described my feelings at the time by saying that for camp life I would infinitely prefer the "Long Valley" at Aldershot.

There is always a difficulty at Gibraltar about housing the troops, when they take over one another's barracks. Of course the regiment we were relieving could not embark until we had cleared out of the ship, and all our baggage was landed; and then there would be the heavy baggage of the new voyagers to be got on board, and all the women and children, etc. But after that part of the business was settled there would be the inspection

of the barracks by the Engineers and Control Department, reckoning "barrack damages," then the formal handing over of the barracks to the new regiment, and possibly some general whitewashing to be done, before they could get into their new home. Hence it was not until Monday that we escaped from our sandy encampment; but after the crowded troopship, even those three nights in a bell tent with seven other men were a comparative luxury.

This "North Front," where we were, and the adjoining "Neutral Ground" between the English and Spanish territory, is a most peculiar natural feature. In the first place, I ought to say that the Rock itself is a narrow promontory running north and south, *i.e.* pointing towards Africa. It is about three miles long and not more than about three-quarters of a mile wide. One of the highest points is the northern or Spanish extremity, and falls off a sheer precipice of about 1200 feet. Immediately at the foot of this tremendous cliff lies the "North Front," a dead level, (. . . . nowhere rising more than 10 feet . . . .) between the two seas, viz. the Bay of Gibraltar on the west, and the Mediterranean on the east. This Isthmus connects Gibraltar with the mainland.

It is about 1000 yards across from sea to sea, and about the same (or perhaps a mile) from the foot of the Rock to where the Isthmus opens out on to the Spanish mainland proper. But between the two territories comes the Neutral Ground, an extent of some 600 yards in width, a mere continuation of the "North Front," and in no way defined except, on our side, by the beats of the sentries, who day and night continue their weary walk; and away on the other side by the stone sentry-boxes of the Spaniards, where during the day may be seen a few long-coated soldiers lounging about or lying on the grass, and where by night many an honest dollar is turned, the fee from the thrifty smuggler, that he may ply undisturbed his precarious trade!

The "North Front" is the scene of various contests, athletic and military, and being the only level spot in our possession, is continually utilised. Here are the rifle-ranges, the brigade parade ground, the only regimental ground available for skirmishing, etc., also the place for the practice of field engineering; throwing up earthworks (no, I must say "sandworks," there is not such a thing as earth in the place), and many other such performances, are carried on here. Here also stand the commis-

sariat cattle sheds, the army laundry, the kennels of the Calpe hunt, and the new waterworks, which supply the whole town with the essential element in almost unlimited quantity. Here, too, is the cemetery, which is used both for town and garrison.

Turning to hours of recreation, the "North Front" is the scene of cricket matches, athletic sports, horse-races, etc. etc. Grass on this sandy plain is almost an impossible luxury, and although it does grow in the rainy season, it has to be tended with loving care, and directly the summer commences it speedily vanishes, and the track of the cricket-ball is marked with clouds of dust, and manœuvres in quarter-column become a very disagreeable necessity.

But although grass is so difficult to raise, and a nice piece of turf for a wicket, or for the finish "down the straight," has become as a dream, mocking the hopes of the enthusiast; still, curiously enough, some flowers seem to thrive, especially geraniums, which grow like weeds. Other plants that grow and spread without any tending are such as the yucca and the prickly pear. This latter forms the great majority of hedges, and grows very rank and strong, as I know to my cost, having

undertaken at one time to "grub up" a good bit of it, and a very prickly job it was. The fruit, which can be had almost for the asking, is eaten freely by the natives. In Gibraltar itself, wherever earth can be found or placed, there are beautiful gardens, the only great necessity being a constant and liberal supply of water. It is an erroneous, but a very prevalent idea, that Gibraltar is a barren rock; this is no doubt the result of the common title given to it "*The* Rock," which naturally suggests the very ideal of ruggedness and desolation. When we landed (at the end of summer) it was looking its worst, but only "very brown," and as soon as the long-expected rain came, vegetation began to show in every nook and cranny. In spring time there are plenty of wild flowers, especially the narcissus, and in private gardens there are to be found, in their season, the clematis, aloe, and roses running wild, bushes of heliotrope, arum, and other plants whose names I never could remember, and among trees the most common are vines and fig-trees, orange, lemon, and olive. There can hardly be imagined a more beautiful and refreshing retreat from the glare of the summer sun than the private gardens, more especially those belonging to the "Convent," the

town residence of the Governor, and "The Mount," where the senior naval officer lives, the latter in particular, from the elevated position, giving beautiful and extensive views, and allowing its happy occupants to benefit by the sea breezes, untainted by the dust and smell of the town.

But this cultivation exists only on the western face of "The Rock," where the slope is for the most part gradual, the town lying along by the sea, and the houses rising tier above tier, connected by endless flights of steps, to a height of nearly 300 feet.

Above the town, zigzag paths lead past batteries and magazines innumerable, to the top of the Rock, or Signal station (1250 feet above sea-level). But all this side being covered with scrubby bushes and broken rocks, it could be easily climbed in a direct line by an active man at almost any point, though there are a few notable exceptions.

On the other or eastern side the case is quite the reverse, that face being an inaccessible cliff, and though there are traditions of its having been scaled, yet in these degenerate days it is considered impossible, and it is left in undisputed possession of the monkeys and eagles. On that side, therefore,

Gibraltar may be considered impregnable. The northern or Spanish end is equally so, for, as before described, it is a precipice 1200 feet high, blocking up nearly the entire width of the Isthmus. Half-way up this cliff are the famous "Galleries," a wonderful piece of work; they consist of passages cut out of the solid rock, with openings like port-holes for the guns to be fired from, and probably are the finest military excavation in the world. The only entrance from the mainland, or (what comes to the same thing) from the North Front, is along one road or causeway, passing along the north-west corner of the cliff, washed on one side by the sea, and on the other by an artificial inundation up to the foot of the rock. This road, which only extends 400 yards or so, is swept by numberless guns, and is reported (no doubt truly) to be undermined, so that it could be rendered useless at a minute's notice. In fact there is a story that some time since, a gunner was taken every day to the passages under the road, and there caused to swear that he would fire the mines at the expense of his own life, if occasion should require it. During the night this road is shut up by three separate sets of gates, securely locked and barred, and watched by several

sentries; and no one but the Governor can get them opened after the "evening gun" has proclaimed them closed. The times vary from 5.20 P.M. in the winter to 8 P.M. in June, and very amusing it is to be near the gates about the time of "gun-fire," and to stand secure oneself on the right side, watching the anxious hurrying of the mixed throng passing in and out: English and Spaniards; pedestrians and equestrians; and more especially the exertions of the country people who supply the market, driving their donkeys that will go the wrong way, and their mules that won't go at all, all jostling one another and trying not to be last; until there appears on the scene, marching rapidly and straight for the gate, the "key-sergeant" and his compact little escort; whose presence causes a few struggles with redoubled energy, then the gates swing to, and all is peace. No one now on the wrong side need trouble himself further. The key-sergeant is immovable as the rock itself, and the laggard must make himself as comfortable as he can away from home, until sunrise next morning, and form good resolutions not to be late again!

It must be remembered that the whole population of Gibraltar, viz. 25,000, of which number, about

7000 are military, have to be fed by produce brought into the place. There is scarcely anything except goat's milk, and a few vegetables produced on The Rock. In consequence of this, and the tobacco trade, it is calculated that 1800 Spaniards come into Gibraltar every day, going out again in the evening as late as they conveniently can; and as they all have things to carry, either in rough cars or on donkeys, the curious scenes that occur at the gates may be imagined. To finish up this subject, I will mention the sources of the food supply.

Meat, chiefly beef, comes from South Spain or Barbary, the former much the better. Barbary also supplies immense quantities of poultry and eggs. Vegetables and fruit come from the surrounding districts of Spain, the chief fruits being oranges, lemons, melons, bananas, figs, and the delicious Muscatel grapes, of which in the season a dishful may be bought for a few pence. During the oppressive summer nights, when weary and ill at ease in a stuffy guard-room, how soothing to refresh oneself with a feast of grapes and figs, the result of a judicious expenditure of a paltry sixpence!

There is also a fair supply of fish, although the once famous tunny fishery is now a thing of the

past. Those most commonly caught are sardines, red mullet, anchovy, mackerel, soles, turbot, etc., but they cannot be termed "first-class."

All these details about Gibraltar were not learnt while I was living in the sandy camp at the North Front. We stayed there three days, and were fully occupied in trying to smarten up after the voyage out, and in sorting our things; for the mess and muddle was so great in the "Euphrates," that when we disembarked, hardly a man had his proper kit complete; straps and belts and pouches, and even bayonets and rifles, had got into the possession of the wrong persons; and very many things were missing altogether, stolen by the drafts that came out with us.

However, we got tolerably well settled by Monday the 6th October, on which day we broke up the camp, and marched back along the road and through the gates just described, then through the long narrow streets of the town, where may always be seen the most curious mixture of races—Moors, Maltese, Spaniards, English, and sailors of all nations—and so on, nearly a couple of miles, to the South Barracks, which stand close over the dockyard, and command a splendid view of the Bay of Gibraltar.

The barracks are much the same here as at other English garrisons, and therefore any description of my new home would be almost a repetition of what I have written before. But what description can convey a just impression of the glorious views of Gibraltar? After three years' acquaintance with them, winter and summer, I have no hesitation in saying they are among the most beautiful I know; and I revelled in the thought that I could, from my barrack room, always have such a treat before my eyes; and I put this idea into practical effect by choosing a bed close to one of the windows which gave me the best view.

The room faced about due west, and being on the first floor, I was able to look over the roofs of the small houses between the barracks and the sea. The dockyard and anchorage for the ships of war and mail steamboats was so immediately underneath, that I looked right down on the decks of vessels lying there, some 150 or 200 feet below. Looking to the right there was the long line of sea wall with its many batteries; and farther up the Bay (off the North Front) the crowded roadstead, occupied by merchant steamships and small sailing traders—a lively scene at all times, and very picturesque

owing to the pretty rig of the Spanish "feluccas" constantly plying between Gibraltar and the neighbouring villages. Straight in front there was the full width of the Bay, about six miles across to the town of Algeciras (famous for its "bull-fights") and a fine background of rocky and wooded hills. Away to the extreme left the grand mountains of Africa rose up beyond the narrow waters of the "Straits," which the eye could follow along for twenty or thirty miles of the "homeward route." Such were the chief features of my view; and though I certainly appreciated it at once, I had not much time in those days for view gazing; but learnt the full beauty of it afterwards during the leisure hours of "Commissioned Rank."

"Regiments come to Gibraltar for '*work*,' not for '*drill*;'" such was the announcement made by the General, to our good Colonel, who apparently was labouring under the delusion that a regiment (containing at least 200 raw recruits) *did* require some regular instruction in the elementary parts of drill and rifle exercise. But necessity knows no law, and the General proved correct; and pretty scenes occurred in consequence, when *the work* of Gibraltar (viz. going on guard and doing fatigue duty) was

being carried out by a lot of lads, so untrained, that I have had them on guard with me when they had only felt the touch of the rifle two days before, and when I have had actually to teach them how to "present arms" when they were in the guard-room between the hours of their going on "sentry;" and when frequently the sergeant in the guard-room has been blamed because the boy outside did not know how to challenge the field officer going his rounds. Such a state of things is indeed bad,—bad for discipline, bad for temper, and making "pride in the regiment" an impossibility. The reason for it is plain, viz. the *economy* of having kept the regiment during its last year at home far below its right strength, and then swamping it with recruits on the very eve of its departure. I believe there must have been 300 men when we landed at Gibraltar who had never been through a course of musketry—which means, they had never fired off a rifle!

In course of time all this was put right, but it was miserable for everybody while it lasted.

The plan of taking the guard duty was very fair. There being five regiments on the Rock, each regiment in turn supplied all the guards for one day; but on Saturdays the duty was divided between

them all; so that, if any one regiment had a great preponderance of "duty soldiers" it would be given a proportionately large number of guards on that day. Another advantage was that on Saturday we always had a brigade drill, and if one regiment had been finding all the duty, it could not have taken part in the "field day."

In addition to the various guards required by each regiment at its own barracks, etc., the garrison duties necessitated every day 5 officers, about 20 sergeants, 25 or 30 corporals, and at least 200 men. In addition to these, the artillery had to supply men for certain guards, and there were also many picquets and patrols told off for evening duty. It may easily be understood then, that when it was the regiment's turn "for work" there were very few men left for anything in the shape of "drill"—in fact, it really did employ all the duty soldiers, and in my regiment very many had to be reckoned as "fit for duty" who were only fit for the lowest squad of the drill instructor. Then the days for regular squad or regimental drill came but seldom. For supposing we supplied the guards on a Wednesday, there would be no drill that day. Thursday would also be nearly a blank day, as no drill could take place before

dinner; the men would not have "cleaned up" after coming off guard until the afternoon. Friday would be free. Saturday, brigade drill (no good for recruits). Monday would be a free day again, and on Tuesday the regiment would have its next turn at guard. After a couple of years on the Rock, and when the men were settled down to their work, and had been got into something like good order, these times and seasons answered very well; and our good Colonel so arranged it that in every week we should have one "all present" parade for steady drill; the slightest irregularity being noticed, and the offender being promptly sent back for a spell of the drill-sergeant's squad; and one day was devoted to practical field manœuvres, one-half of the battalion opposed to the other, and very often some position on the North Front was regularly defended and attacked.

My first time of going on guard involved a duty, which, being of a somewhat romantic nature, and almost peculiar to Gibraltar, it may not be amiss to describe.

I have already mentioned the elaborate system of defence of the land entrance from Spain, and the scene of the key-sergeant locking up the gates at

the north extremity of the Rock. But away on the other side of the town there are four or five gates which are used for getting access to the garrison from the sea. For instance, one leads down to the dockyard; another to the jetty, where ships get their stores, and fill up their water tanks; a third is the regular landing-place for passengers by the mails, officers, ships' crews, etc. But unless these gates were carefully locked and barred, and zealously guarded during the hours of darkness, who could answer for the safety of this "solitary and war-worn fortress"?

Various regulations are in force as to what use may be made of these gates, and happy is the man who, having had this precious charge on his hands for twenty-four hours, escapes falling into the clutches of the town-major, ever on the watch to catch an unwary sergeant! This was the first public duty I performed at Gibraltar, and although I was utterly unversed in the ways and customs of the place, I escaped on this occasion without a question being asked.

It takes the key-sergeant about a couple of miles' walk to go his rounds locking or unlocking the gates, and although I was duly impressed with the vast

importance of my trust, I could not help an inclination to amusement occasionally. I was armed with an enormous bunch of keys, some of them eighteen inches long at least, and so heavy that they might be termed "offensive" weapons as much as "defensive." Besides these, I had an equally large and antique lantern. Whenever in my rounds I came near a sentry, I was promptly challenged in the usual form:—"Halt! Who goes there?" The answer, according to regulations, was as promptly made by the significant word "Keys." The sentry rejoined in due course "Stand, Keys—advance one, and give the countersign;" and then again, when satisfied that I was not an impostor, "Pass, Keys; all's well!"—so entirely was the individuality of the man lost sight of when compared with the emblems of his important office.

Three of the gates under my charge were kept closed from sunset to sunrise, and two others were *locked* at the same time, but were available for use by the officers of the army and navy, and certain other persons with special leave, up till 1 A.M. To make sure that no one used these gates illegally, the key-sergeant had to keep a list of all that passed through, sending in their names and the hour of

their ingress or egress, to the town-major the next morning. Thus, if any breach of regulations took place, the unhappy sergeant was easily and immediately called to account.

The key-sergeant was considered to be "on guard," and was detailed for his duty exactly in the same way as the others who were doing ordinary guard work, but he had no men or sentries under him. His duties lasted for twenty-four hours, and when the guard (to which he was attached) was relieved, he went away with it, having first handed the keys over formally to the new key-sergeant. He had, on the whole, rather an easy time of it, as there was nothing much to do during the day, although this was partly made up for during the night by a considerable amount of running about, and sometimes a good deal of worry.

CHAPTER XII.

Quaint regulations in force at Gibraltar—Gibraltar a bad station for soldiers—Bathing places—The Levanter—I refuse a commission in a West India Regiment—A more welcome promise soon made—A scrape on guard.

It will not be out of place to mention here briefly some more of the peculiar regulations in force at Gibraltar, and which appear at first sight to be almost unnecessary in times of peace. But naughty-minded people say that these regulations are very life and breath to the "town-major," who has to enforce them, and that if they did not exist, or even if they were simplified (as they well might be) Gibraltar might learn, as other garrisons have learnt, to do without a "town-major" altogether. In this I refer more especially to certain orders of the sentries, which I never could understand at the time, and could not now explain on paper; but the following may be taken as fair specimens of the restraint on

the residents of the place, and which must be very annoying to them.

No "inhabitant" (*i.e.* civilian) is allowed to go up the Rock, nor to sketch on the Rock, without special written permission.

No inhabitant can visit "the Galleries" without a written permission, although any one wishing to walk through them must apply to a sergeant of artillery for the gates to be opened, and a gunner must accompany the party throughout.

No inhabitant is allowed to be in the streets after midnight, without a written permission, and must carry a lantern with him!

Civilians desiring to fish must be provided with written permissions, and then can only go to two special localities.

And so on, not to mention other rules which apply to soldiers and civilians alike, directing them as to certain parts of the roads which may be ridden over, but not driven along; and other parts which may be ridden and driven over, but may not be used by pedestrians.

After a year or two people get so accustomed to all these things that they hardly think of them; but at first it is a real difficulty to know what may or

may not be done, and it is a decided annoyance when peacefully walking along an empty road, to be suddenly shouted at by some fierce sentry, and made to go this way or that for no apparent reason.

No doubt Gibraltar and its 25,000 inhabitants are kept under good discipline by the "town-major" and his myrmidons!

It is to be feared that soldiers have a bad time of it at Gibraltar, take it all round. The "work" of the place is hard, and exactly of those kinds that they most dislike, viz.—(1) going on guard, which comes round with the utmost regularity every five or six days; (2) all sorts of fatigue duty—more especially "public works"—such as digging out batteries, moving guns or ammunition, loading and unloading ship stores, etc.; and, in fact, there is no knowing what they may have to do or how long they may be employed, and uncertainty in their work is the one thing most distasteful to English soldiers. But even this annoyance would be mitigated if there was any opportunity of pleasant amusement for their hours of leisure.

The only possible chance of their getting healthy recreation is by going to the North Front; and the barracks, with one exception, are too far off to make

it a popular place of resort for the mass of privates and non-commissioned officers. Boating, again, would appear a feasible method of their getting some amusement, but it is kept under very hard and fast restrictions — perhaps not altogether unnecessary. The walks up the Rock are even forbidden ground, and so the poor fellows have nothing left but to knock about the town and visit the wine shops, and the results are very sad.

It was dreadful for the first few months after we landed to see the state of intoxication that some of our young soldiers got into. They did not know the strength of the liquor, which, being very cheap, they drank off like beer, and the result was a fit of drunkenness lasting sometimes for a couple of days. Another great temptation arises when ships of war are in harbour, and the crews get their leave. The "blue jackets" simply come on shore to spend their money and get drunk; and the bad class of soldier is quite ready to take part in the spree, and looking out, perhaps, for the chance of "getting a drink for nothing." I have had dreadful scenes and the utmost annoyance in my guard-room on these occasions.

Gibraltar is a charming station for officers, and

chiefly for this sole reason, that it is so easy for them to get away from it! It is nothing for them to "take a car" to the North Front, or to ride out and enjoy the beautiful scenery in the neighbouring districts on the Mainland. The sportsmen get their hunting or shooting; and boating, though not much patronised, is very easy for them to get to any extent. A week's leave (not at all uncommon) will take them through magnificent country in Spain or Africa, and five days will see them in England "on leave," which may be reckoned on for four months of every year. Officers get plenty of hard work at Gibraltar, no doubt, but they have many opportunities of real enjoyment. The "private men" get hard work also; but, month after month, and year after year, are tied down to the Rock, and, indeed, can only make use of a part of that. My regiment was quartered there for four years, and I feel sure that very many men never got to the "Signal Station" even, during all that time, and hardly a single soldier (except an officer's servant, perhaps), ever crossed the line of sentries and the Neutral Ground.

Judging from my own experience, the one redeeming point of Gibraltar, from the soldier's view

of life, is the bathing; for within pretty easy reach of nearly every barrack may be found a place where good swimmers can enjoy themselves to their heart's content.

We were especially fortunate at the South Barracks; three or four minutes down a steep path, then through one of the "key-sergeant's" gates, and down a spiral staircase, brought us to the "Rosia" jetty or breakwater, and from there we could take "headers" (at least those of us who dared) into deep water, clear as crystal, and generally quite warm.

Separate accommodation was provided for men and officers, but at both places there were spring boards, platforms, and landing steps. It is one of the great peculiarities of Gibraltar that at many points deep water runs right up to the Rock. This is chiefly the case at the southern end; for off the North Front, where the land is low, the harbour is also shallow, whereas off the steep parts of the Rock, big ships could run their noses against the cliffs.

At Rosia bathing-place we could often see the bottom, but I hardly ever remember having *touched* it, and a plunge there, after a stuffy night and an early parade, was a true luxury. But "no rose

without a thorn," and even Rosia had its drawback in the shape of the Octopus! There was more often chaffy excitement about these sea-monsters than real danger; but they were very frequent visitors in the Bay, and extremely unpleasant companions, for even if they did not lay hold of one, any contact with any part of them would cause a serious sting, lasting for some days.

The only restriction on the bathing was during the summer, when men were not allowed to go into the water during the middle of the day. Besides this "garrison order," any regiment could, of course, frame its own rules and regulations, so as to prevent men being too much out of barracks, in case they should be wanted for any duty.

Although we did not reach Gibraltar until October, we had many weeks of most enjoyable weather, in which bathing seemed almost a necessity. October and November are not considered really hot months by the people who have been broiling there for four months previously, but to the new-comers it was like a second summer, and in November, at latest, the long-expected rains begin.

As a general rule, there is no rainfall to speak of from May to November, and one may reckon on

at least four months of very hot weather, when all who can do so, gladly turn their backs on the Rock. The average temperature of July is 92°, but the heat is more oppressive than the thermometer indicates. This is owing to the want of free circulation of air, caused by the height and shape of the Rock, and the prevalence of certain winds. Then, again, the nights retain nearly all the heat of the day, for the limestone (of which Gibraltar is chiefly composed) being thoroughly baked during the day, holds and transmits the heat far into the night, and thus the air has never time to cool.

Perhaps the greatest peculiarity as regards "climate" is the east wind or "Levanter," and the formation of cloud which always accompanies it.

As soon as the Levanter has set in, a dense dark cloud is formed over the Rock, and there hangs, like a veritable pall, and dissolves in a clammy moisture. The cloud is apparently the result of a moist wind from the sea, striking on the lofty Rock; for it is only *over* the Rock that the cloud exists. Away to the east or windward side the sky is clear, and there is bright sunshine, and by riding into Spain, sometimes even on the North Front and Neutral Ground, one escapes the Levanter cloud; or the same result

may be obtained by getting half a mile out into the bay, where the nasty vapour is seen blowing out and disappearing in long streaks over one's head. The contrast between the two sides of the cloud is most striking, when seen from a mile or so away to the north. The east side immediately over the Rock is hard, dark, and well defined, and appears to be immovable, whereas the other side, as stated, frays out into thin lines of light vapour. Its general aspect might be almost compared to a big Atlantic roller on the point of breaking; the smooth heavy back, the curling over the Rock, and the spray blown on, dissolving in mist.

The effect of the Levanter on the inhabitants is well described as follows:—"Its presence is quickly recognised by dull pains in the bones, a parched tongue, and an oppressive languor which paralyses both mind and body." I cannot remember any time of greater exhaustion, than after a worrying night on guard under a bad Levanter. If anything could drive a man to seek relief in stimulants, that would; but, with the energy to do it, a plunge into Rosia Bay would, perhaps, be a more desirable and more lasting remedy for the languor described above.

While I was thus gaining experience of Levanters

and Octopoids, my friends at home were beginning to move the authorities again about my commission; and, about the second week in October 1874, I was offered a commission in a West India regiment, or at any rate I was asked what my views were on that subject. The letter containing that proposal arrived one day just as I was coming off guard. I do not know whether I had been suffering from the presence of drunken sailors, or "Levanters," but my answer, written to my brother without the slightest delay, was not couched in terms of official politeness. It seemed almost ludicrous to imagine that I should accept such an ending to my fourteen months' work; and I still agree with what I said then, "that I would sooner go without a commission altogether, than be quietly sat upon and *shunted* in such a manner." For it must be remembered that, according to the regulations in force at that time, I could have had a West Indian commission for the mere asking, and could almost have demanded it as a right, at the very time I enlisted, for I was within the limits of age for an Oxford graduate. Of course the proposal may have been made through kindness, to give me an opportunity of quitting the ranks with some show of success; but I must give myself the credit

of having never wavered for an instant, in pursuit of the object which I had in view, and I chose to bide my time.

Very shortly after this I had further news of a commission, which indeed reached me within a fortnight of the very poor offer just mentioned. This time it was quite a different story, and was in consequence of a visit paid to the Military Secretary by my brother. I do not exactly know what passed between them, but the result was that, owing to some technical difficulty, I could not be given a commission at once; but that at the beginning of the next military year, *i.e.* in April, I should be given my much-coveted reward. Of course accidents might happen. I might get into some scrape, or might not pass the examination, etc., but now I had the definite promise to look forward to, that in six months' time I might fairly expect to take my proper place and position in Her Majesty's Army. I believe the only qualification made was—that I must not remain in the same regiment as an officer. It is an invariable rule that non-commissioned officers promoted should change their regiments, as otherwise the altered position might lead to serious inconveniences—for on the one hand there might be

too much familiarity, or on the other hand possibly spite and resentment, when one from the barrack-room was suddenly placed in a position of so much authority over his old comrades. I certainly felt rather sorry at the idea of giving up the regiment wherein all my hopes and fears had been so long centred; but the good prospect opening before me made me put such minor considerations on one side. Perhaps also I had an inkling that my Colonel would manage to get that usual custom overruled in my case, for I knew he wished to keep me in his regiment, and nothing pleased me more than the idea of still serving under so good a soldier.

About the middle of November (1874) another change of quarters was ordered for me. It arose in consequence of the great number of recruits we brought out with us, and although I did not fancy being moved away from the Headquarters and the luxuries of the sergeants' mess when first I heard my destination, yet it proved afterwards to be a very pleasant change. My new duties were, to assist in teaching the recruits their musketry drill and firing, and for that purpose to leave the barracks and live in the huts at the North Front. There would be about 40 recruits at a time, and 2 sergeants in

charge of the "class" or course. I was to go as senior sergeant, and therefore all the responsibility of the general behaviour of the detachment would rest with me. It has no doubt appeared from what I have had to say in other places that a great deal of laxness often attends a small detachment away from the supervision of adjutant and sergeant-major; and I had my misgivings as to how I should get on with a party of raw recruits, and never an old soldier to help me and steady them. However, it was a pleasant little excitement, and I thought it would help nicely to wile away the time until the long-looked-for April arrived. But before transferring the scene of my labours to the North Front, I must relate the worst experience I ever had, as regards getting into scrapes, which I can't help thinking even now might have ended in a most serious catastrophe for me, even to the extent of my being tried by a court-martial. I must say, to start with, that I was perfectly innocent of the supposed neglect of duty, at any rate as far as I could tell; but some of the circumstances were of such a nature that the whole case was made the very most of by the authorities.

The scene of my trouble was the same as that (already described) of my first public duty on the

Rock, viz. "The Ragged Staff" Guard; and the particular default with which I was charged was having allowed three sailors to pass through the gates from a ship lying in the harbour into the town during the night, and I have said before that no crime could be greater at Gibraltar than passing persons through any closed gate without proper authority—more especially of course after dark; and what made this case ten times worse was, that the three sailors were under punishment and confinement in their own ship (an English frigate), that they managed to escape from her, and came ashore in the captain's skiff. Then having "by some means" got into the garrison, they proceeded to get drunk, and were so found next morning and taken back to their ship. The Captain of the frigate complained to the town-major that his regulations must be very much at fault if such things could happen; and the town-major naturally and properly felt highly aggrieved, and came down sharp and fast on the supposed defaulter. Happily for me, I was not the only one liable. There was another sergeant equally or more involved, and over both of us was an officer—the officer of the guard—who, although as a matter of fact he had nothing to do

with opening and shutting the gate, was held responsible that the sergeants under him did their duty.

To show the extent to which I was liable to blame for this most grievous breach of discipline, I must define my duties and position on the night in question. On that other occasion recounted before I was doing the duty of "key-sergeant," but on this occasion I was the sergeant in charge of the guard, which was situated close to one of the principal entrances to the garrison, leading from the harbour to the town, and only available for use after dark by officers and other specified persons. All the names of those passing through the gate during the night had to be entered on paper and sent to the town-major in the morning. The care of the gate was divided between two sergeants; during the daytime, the sergeant of the guard (under orders of the officer of the guard) was responsible; but at night, after the gates were locked, the key-sergeant (also under the officer's directions) was attached to the guard for the purpose of attending to the gate, the sergeant of the guard having plenty to do looking after his sentries and prisoners.

The only exception to this arrangement was during the first hour or so after sunset. During

that time the key-sergeant had to be going his rounds, locking up gates in other places, and making all snug for the night. While he was away, the sergeant of the guard had to attend to both duties, viz. looking after his own men and the gates. Now if it could have been proved that the three runaways from the ship got through into the town between 6 and 7.30 P.M., the fault would clearly have been mine; but if, on the contrary, it could be shown that they did not get through till later in the night, the fault must have rested with the key-sergeant.

I had no suspicion that there was anything wrong until three or four hours after I came off guard next morning, when I was rudely awakened to the state of the case by a telegram from the town-major's office ordering me to attend there at once. Besides myself, the key-sergeant had to go also, and the officer of the guard. When I heard of the "crime" that had been committed, I was seriously alarmed, and although I felt perfectly conscious of having done my duty honestly and faithfully to the best of my ability, I did not see how I could clear myself, except on my plain assertion of that fact. And if it had been proved that either through carelessness or even ignorance I had allowed these men

to pass, I certainly think I should have been tried by court-martial and reduced to the ranks, which would have been a pretty sort of ending to my recently-promised commission. In my defence, however, I appealed fearlessly to my own report of the persons passed during my time of responsibility, and the only party at all resembling the deserters were two sailors and another, who styled himself a "petty officer," who as such had authority to pass sailors by giving his name, and I argued that even if these were the men in question, I had proved my utter ignorance of doing anything wrong by deliberately entering their names in my report, and not only that, but I had clearly carried out the very letter of my instructions. After a very brief investigation the town-major sent me about my business, to my enormous relief and gratification, saying he acquitted me of all blame, for the simple reason that the sailors had not left their ship until after nine o'clock, which was more than an hour after the time for my handing over the duties to the key-sergeant. But notwithstanding that apparently conclusive piece of evidence, to this day I believe that the three men entered duly in my "gate report" were no other than the escaped prisoners, and that the

fact was that they were only *not missed* until nine o'clock.

While I went on my way rejoicing, the other sergeant was kept to bear his part of the burden, and how he escaped I don't know. I daresay there was no evidence against him to justify his being brought to trial. It would be difficult to prove that the sailors had actually passed the gate except on their own assertion, for they might have had means of climbing over or around some other way. And another point to be noticed is, that the officer of the guard was really responsible, and so the sergeant could hardly have been punished without the officer having to be dealt with in the same manner, and that would have been a very serious affair.

If I had chosen, I could have told a tale about the sergeant that would have astonished the town-major and perhaps the sergeant himself. He was what is called extremely "slack" in his duty; the sort of man utterly unfitted for the post of non-commissioned officer; who would shirk any duty that gave him trouble, if he thought he could escape detection; and at this distance of time I may, as an example, mention a fact that I never opened my lips about while I was in the regiment. During my "rounds"

of visiting sentries, etc., on the very night in question, I went down to the quay, where the all-important gate was situated, and there, to my horror, saw it left standing wide open—nothing to bar the entrance to the garrison. Spaniards or Moors might have walked in in countless numbers, and have taken possession once again of the "solitary war-worn fortress"—*while the key-sergeant slept.* Yes, such, indeed, was the sad picture presented to my eyes, when, with hurried steps, I reached the guard-room. Without waking my comrade, I seized the key, and in another minute I breathed freely again, for the gate was locked, and Gibraltar was once more in safety.

This, of course, was a gross case of neglect. I hope few men in the army would have done such a thing, but I know well the intense provocation it was at that place to be continually running up and down to open the gate, and hardly ever to have any one ask for admittance who was not entitled to it. Then when one thought, "Well, I will try and get a bit of sleep for a few minutes"—and having stretched one's self out on the guard-bed, to be roused up by the horrid sound, "Gate! Gate!" and so on, and so on, all through the night. And this,

I imagine, was too much for my friend, or it may have been mere stupid forgetfulness; but whatever the reason, the state of the gate and of the key-sergeant was as described, and I have often wondered what the latter thought of it, or, indeed, whether he noticed that the gate had been locked by some one besides himself, for I never even told him what I had done, as I had my suspicions that the gate was left open deliberately; in which case I judged that it would be much pleasanter for both of us that I should know nought about it. I must add, however, both for my own justification in not reporting the circumstance, and in fairness to my friend the key-sergeant, that I had not the slightest proof or particle of evidence to show that the gate had been left open deliberately, and indeed I think it most probable that the sergeant had meant to close the gate, and that either he had failed to turn the key, or that the bolt had failed to catch, or that in some other way the gate had been able to be blown open.

Then, again, for the sake of the uninitiated, I must say that there was not the slightest harm in the sergeant's lying down to sleep. The sentry outside the guard-room could keep the gate in view or within hearing, and would call up the key-

sergeant directly any one wished to pass through. I think myself that this story is to be explained by imputing to the sergeant mere carelessness; and it is quite possible that he was utterly ignorant of the state of the gate; but had it been brought up against him, his previous character would have done much to prejudice him in the eyes of his judges. Take it how we may, the thing ought not to have been possible; and, with such a method of doing duty, there is not much wonder that three canny sailors, anxious for a spree ashore, should be able to indulge their fancies, notwithstanding "town-majors," "gate reports," and "key-sergeants," and all the other inventions for safe-guarding the old Rock, and keeping its inhabitants and visitors in proper order.

CHAPTER XIII.

To the North Front in charge of a musketry detachment—Life in the huts—The beginning of the end—The final examination.

THE exciting incident related in the last chapter having been brought to a satisfactory conclusion, I must return to my duties at the North Front, where I had been ordered as assistant musketry sergeant, and having the charge of the party of recruits sent there.

The detachment consisted of 1 lieutenant, 4 non-commissioned officers, of which I was the senior, and 55 men. The work was extremely monotonous, as there were four short drills every day; and every drill the same. Later on the shooting began, at which I had only to keep the registers, and generally look after the lads. But it was easy duty and a pleasant change, and above all other advantages was the fact that I had no guard work to do. Another inducement to me for undertaking the course was a wish ex-

pressed by the Officer instructor that I should be "in charge." It may have been done through kindness to me, or because he knew that I could be trusted to keep things fairly straight; at any rate I was naturally pleased at the attention, and, when once settled at my work, felt very grateful for having been given the position of comparative freedom which it proved to be. The disadvantages of the place were that there was no sergeants' mess, and that I had only one other sergeant to associate with. Happily for me, he was a very respectable young fellow, very quick and intelligent, and thoroughly understood my social position, and treated me exactly as I should have wished. But the worst of the North Front was the fact of our being locked up at night, and that no one was allowed to move outside the square of huts after dark. The evening gun fired at 5.30 P.M., and after that time everybody had to be "at home." Although the evenings were naturally very long, and tedious even, to me, it was much worse for the men. There was no reading or recreation room at that time, and the result was that there was every inducement for them to spend their time in the canteen; or in their rooms playing cards and gambling.

We managed to get some books, papers, etc., later on, and also some games, such as draughts or dominoes, but at best the North Front is a very undesirable place for a lot of recruits to be quartered in. They feel so entirely isolated and literally "locked out," that they are inclined to take liberties, and to attempt shirking necessary discipline which they would not dream of at Headquarters.

Another plan I tried was to shorten the evenings by allowing the men to go to bed earlier, say at 9.0 P.M. They were only too thankful for the idea; but on reference to Headquarters it was thought to be unadvisable, and was therefore never actually put to the test.[1]

The general features of the North Front were described at some length a little way back, and the only thing to add to that is a brief description of the huts; for on our first landing we used tents. The huts were built entirely of wood, raised about two feet from the ground, standing on iron and stone pillars, which might almost be called "legs." By this

[1] I forget whether the idea was started on this occasion or later on, when I was at the North Front as an officer in charge of the detachment. Whenever it was, I remember that the men were most thankful for the suggestion, although never carried out.

means there was always a perfectly free current of air maintained underneath, which doubtless helped materially to keep them cool—sometimes too cool, as we found to our cost—for the floors were not exactly well fitted, and the wind used to whistle up between the planks very unpleasantly.

Each hut consisted of two large rooms for men, and a small one in the middle for the sergeant in charge. The partition being only thin planking, everything could be heard passing in the men's rooms; and so the sergeant, though out of sight, and having whatever privacy he might want, was quite as capable of keeping order as if he had been present, more especially as there was a small pane of glass let into the partition, and the door of the sergeant's room was placed immediately between the doors of the two rooms for the men, so that he could pop in at a moment's notice. This was a most satisfactory state of things for me; and as the detachment occupied two whole huts, or four rooms, there was a separate room for the two sergeants, but, as a matter of fact, my fellow non-commissioned officer and I shared the same room. I knew he very much preferred having company, and, on the whole, considering his character and that I was the senior, I was

quite willing to fall in with his ideas. The very fact of there being only two occupants made it certain that each one would have the room continually to himself; and after fourteen months of barrack room, I really felt that occasional short periods of privacy were all that could be desired by the most fastidious.

Another point I gained by the agreement that we should share one room was, that I worked my companion into doing all the "catering." He, in fact, was cook and housekeeper, an office very much to his liking, considering he had my purse to fall back on in case the rations were not sufficient. We arranged to draw our 2 lbs. of meat either every day or alternate days, according to the state of our larder! or whether we had been investing privately in supplies from the market; and naturally enough the man that cut up the rations liked to give the sergeant a nice piece! Then there was a little shop in the encampment where we could buy extra bread, eggs, fish, etc., and sometimes I used to get the "caterer" to go off to the market, and invest half a dollar in adding to our ordinary supply of vegetables—and being a "sharp customer," he used to keep our table very well supplied; in fact it was no uncommon thing for us to have a good bit of beef-

steak for breakfast, and as much as we could eat for dinner besides; or a beef-steak pudding was a very popular dish with our housekeeper, who took the greatest pride in all his productions, and was also very fond of showing me his skill, in such things as rolling out the dough with my round ruler,—the neatest way of crinkling the edges of the pie-crust,—and explaining to me the necessity of placing a cup inside the pudding to collect or make gravy!

I never could understand where all the meat that we had came from, out of two rations, and I looked back with surprise at the miserable food I had when at Aldershot, and really wondered how I could have got on with that hard work with so little nourishment, when now, with comparatively such easy work and with such very different fare, I by no means thought myself over-fed, or likely to get too fat. However, there the food was, and I ate my share and was thankful, and wisely followed the old maxim of asking no questions, so that I might be spared all lies.

We stayed on very happily at the "North Front" all through November, and nothing happened worthy of remark. The recruits were pushed through their course of musketry as fast as pos-

sible, as there were plenty more waiting to come down for the same work, as soon as the first batch had finished. I suppose I must have kept a pretty tight hand over them, or at least a constant close supervision, for there was no outbreak of any sort, and no important breach of discipline. As I have said before, directly a small number of soldiers are separated from the headquarters of the regiment, they are inclined to take liberties with discipline, and get into bad and lazy habits, which often bring them into trouble. I was lucky enough on this occasion to keep everything going smoothly, and thus the time passed away pleasantly enough. Towards the end of November, however, the weather began to be cold and rough. Rain fell for the first time about the first week in December, and we began to wish ourselves in more substantial quarters. The huts were very "airy," to put it mildly, and I remember continually having to sit in my little room at night, with my greatcoat on and the bed-rug wound round my legs and under my feet, to keep off the draught blowing up through the badly-fitted planks of the floor. Another cause of cold arose from the fact of the huts being freely ventilated at the top. The roof was built so as not to

join at the top, but over the angle there was a separate little piece of roof which, being raised three or four inches from the other, allowed a free current of air to come down into the room. During the greater part of the year these huts and their ventilations were very agreeable, but about December and January they were decidedly chilly, the worst time being when snow had fallen on the high hills or mountains near the south coast of Spain, and the wind, blowing strong from that quarter, brought a good deal of the cold with it. On one or two occasions this wind was so strong and keen that the men could not handle their rifles, and musketry had to be suspended.

There was a report current at Gibraltar, that these huts had been made for Bermuda or the West Indies; and that they were shipped to Gibraltar by mistake. Whether there was any good foundation for this rumour I do not know, but any one using them in cold weather could easily imagine their having been designed for a warmer climate.

But any such discomforts as cold winds and draughty rooms had little or no effect upon me at this time. I was in first-rate health, occupying a responsible position, with work quite according to

my taste. I had no "guards" to annoy me, and above all there were evident signs and trustworthy promises that my commission would not be very much longer delayed. I did not know then, and I never heard why the Horse Guards authorities chose this particular time to look upon me with such favour, when, only three or four months before, such a different line had been taken. Possibly my good Colonel had again represented at Headquarters my eligibility for a commission, or it may have been through the mediation of my friends at home; who, ever since my leaving for Gibraltar, had been most assiduous in their endeavours to prevent my "case" being forgotten, as it was likely enough to be, when the regiment was out of England.

But whatever the cause, the result was highly satisfactory, and it was shown to me, in the first place, by the Colonel himself, who read me a letter from the Military Secretary at the Horse Guards, to the effect that "he was glad to say the Duke of Cambridge had consented to my having a commission in my own regiment, that he was pleased that I had got my commission at last, and that I should be gazetted very soon." Whereupon the Colonel, and another officer who was present, shook hands

with me, and welcomed me as a brother officer. Leaving the Colonel, I called (at his request) on his wife, who greeted me in the most cordial manner; and expressed, most kindly, how glad she was at the thought of my hardships being so nearly at an end.

This was the first sudden rush of good tidings, which fell upon my willing ears on the 17th November. It was, indeed, utterly unexpected, and I suppose all the more welcome on that account. No doubt but that I walked back to the North Front that day with a light heart, and only smiled at every worry or discomfort.

It was very soon generally known that my promotion was not far off. The officers, all of them, took occasion to congratulate me, and the sergeants used frequently to make remarks on the subject. The only thing that troubled me at all, was an idea started by the Colonel, and, in fact, expressed plainly as his wish, that I should not go home when I was gazetted. He said, "You must stick to your post. You must take up your things, and walk out of the barrack-room into the officers' mess. That would be a grand thing to do," etc. And I certainly would have done anything to please the Colonel; I owed

him so much, and respected him so highly, and admired him. But the move he proposed was plainly impossible. I could not take up my position as an officer, and join in "polite society" again, with only a sergeant's coat on my back, and soldier's boots on my feet; and my quarters as an officer would be entirely unfurnished, with the exception of the regulation—one table, two chairs, and fire-irons! All my kit would have to be got from England. It was also a decided concession on the part of the Horse Guards authorities, and a distinct breach of the regulations, that I should remain at all in the regiment as an officer; it certainly, therefore, seemed advisable to make some definite break, while I was making such a great change in my position.

And can any one doubt that there was also another reason? For fourteen or fifteen months I had been nearly isolated from all my natural friends and relations, and I had been living at "very high pressure," to say the least of it. Who would deny that I had fairly earned a couple of months' rest and consolation, both for mind and body?

I believe I took my coming promotion extremely calmly; but perhaps it made my association with the

sergeants rather more difficult. Of course, I did not make the slightest difference in my behaviour to them, nor in my behaviour to the officers; but whereas, up till this time, I had made the men and sergeants feel that I was really one of themselves, and had kept all the acting (which I always felt it to be) entirely to myself, now I could do so no longer—the game was played out, and there was no use in trying to shirk the fact that my position for the last year had been a false one, and that I was to regain, almost immediately, my natural sphere of action. This may seem a little at variance with what I have described before, but I think it can be explained.

There can be little doubt that the privates and sergeants felt and knew that my social position and antecedents were very different from their own—they must have done so; more especially when I first joined. But I believe they very soon learnt that in a military sense I was thoroughly one of themselves; whatever had to be done, I could do, and did do, exactly as they would have done it, and (although I may be wrong in this supposition) I believe they thought that it was all quite natural to me to do so. But with me it was very different; every day of my life, and every duty I performed, reminded me that I

was "acting a part," and that the more perfectly I could do the acting, the more comfortable it would be for me; and in the earlier days I always suppressed, as far as I could, any mention of my getting a commission. But now, of course, it was out of the question for me to carry on in this style, for I quite expected that any day I might hear that my commission was a *fait accompli.* And therefore at this time, though I made no apparent difference in my behaviour, I could not help feeling that my companions were conscious of my acting a part that was not natural to me. From this time I was known far and wide to be in a different position, even in a military sense, from all other sergeants. The "cat was out of the bag," and the game was played out; but I was still in charge of the recruits at the North Front. If I could have been offered my choice, I should certainly have got away from the regiment before my commission appeared in the *Gazette,* as I was almost dreading the sudden change —the day, for instance, when all my old friends and comrades should begin saluting me. I felt perfectly comfortable at the idea of getting amongst my officers as an equal, and decidedly felt anxious to be on friendly terms with the ladies of the regiment;

but the other part of the business was rather distasteful to me. But of course I could not move; and there was, in fact, a good bit more for me to go through before I returned my sergeant's kit into stores; and the only precaution I took was to order at a tailor's a suit of plain clothes and a hat, and a few shirts, etc. etc., so that I might go home more comfortably; and these things, when ready, I got him to keep for me until I was actually gazetted.

The first news of my coming commission reached me, as I have said before, on November 17, and during the following ten days I had no idea what was to be the next step in the proceedings; but one Sunday evening, November 29 I think it was, I was told, most unexpectedly, that on the very next day, at 11 A.M., I was to be examined, to see if I was professionally fit for my promotion.

I think most likely I knew that such an examination was on the cards, but I certainly expected a few days' notice. It was, however, only an exemplification of the old saying—"The English soldier must be ready to go anywhere and do anything," so off I went to the examination room on the Monday morning, to face the three officers who were appointed to examine me, and whom, according to my old

Oxford traditions, I was in duty bound to hate; and who, according to the same traditions, were in duty bound to try and "pluck" me. The examiners were a Colonel of Artillery, a Captain of Royal Engineers, and a Captain of Infantry; the latter, curiously enough, was well acquainted with, and an old friend of, my family. It seemed a very strange meeting, one almost worthy of being recounted in a novel, that we should meet for the first time in such a place, and on such peculiar business. Perhaps it was just one more of those pieces of good fortune that came to me at lucky intervals (I certainly thought so at the time), that at this my final trial I should have a *bonâ fide* friend to look after my interests.

The examination in itself was not anything very alarming, except that I felt that so much hung upon the issue of it. I had three papers to write which occupied all one day and the morning of the next. The subjects were purely technical, viz. drill, guard work, musketry, etc., and the interior economy of a regiment, with the regulations for the pay and messing of the troops, and the supply of clothing, etc., military discipline and law, and those parts of the Queen's regulations applying to the duties and conduct of subaltern officers.

A hundred questions were set on these subjects, and I heard from the president of the Examination Board, as I left after the last paper, that I had done remarkably well, which was no small comfort to me, and made me think of my examiners with a much more kindly feeling than I ever used to do in the old days, after "Smalls" or "Great Go"!

The last part of the examination might be termed *viva voce*. It was, in fact, to test my powers of practical drill in the field. As *I* read the regulations referring to my examination, I thought I had only to drill "a company," and for that purpose I waited on the parade ground nearest to our barracks at the appointed time, meeting there the three examining officers. In a few minutes what was my surprise to hear the Regimental drum and fife band strike up, and shortly after to see the whole battalion, headed by the adjutant, come winding on to the ground! A few well-known words of command followed, and the regiment being duly formed up, was handed over in the usual manner by the adjutant to the senior examining officer, who, in his turn, handed it over to me, that I might exhibit my skill in manœuvring, and my powers of giving practical instruction to a battalion on parade. My feel-

ings may be more easily imagined than described, when I found myself in this conspicuous position, confronted by so many well-known faces, my own company (No. 1) in its usual place of honour in front; my friend the sergeant-major (as I imagined) ready to seize on any mistake I might make, however trivial, and to criticise the very tone of my voice; and even the band boys, now that their labours were at an end for the present, pricking up their ears and thinking it all a capital joke.

But whatever my feelings may have been, they were not given long indulgence. I was ordered to go through and explain certain movements, not according to my own choice, but as the examiners decided; and this I certainly could not have done satisfactorily except in consequence of the knowledge I had acquired as a volunteer officer before I enlisted. I mean that during the fourteen or fifteen months that I had been in the regular army, I had certainly never had any opportunity of instructing a battalion. Of recruit and company drill I had done plenty, but my only experience of regimental drill was by being in the ranks; so here, again, at a somewhat critical moment, my life and pursuits

previous to enlisting were of material assistance to me in my struggle for a commission.

After about fifteen or twenty minutes of this work, I was directed to go through some musketry drill, which was at any rate pretty familiar to me; and my knowledge of that subject was fully tested by one of the officers standing behind me, following my words in a drill book which he held open in his hand. The examination was concluded by my being asked a lot of questions on various practical matters of drill and musketry, and I was sent about my business; and as the regiment marched back to its quarters to the stirring strains of the drums and fifes, I wended my way contentedly and even joyously back to my little home in the North Front hutment, feeling certain that even if I had not gained "Honours," I had at least added one more to my list of "Testamurs."

It was with considerable satisfaction that I watched the Mail Packet steam out of the Bay of Gibraltar, that was carrying home my examination papers and the verdict of the Board of Officers, who had, I felt almost certain, expressed themselves satisfied with my professional knowledge. I began forthwith to reckon up the days that must elapse

before the final decision of my case emanated from the Horse Guards, and the long-wished-for "gazette" appeared in print. It was about the 10th of December; the steamboat would reach Southampton about the 15th; allow a week for consultation at Headquarters, that would bring it on to the 22nd, and there would be no likelihood of my getting before Christmas day even a telegram from my friends to give me the news that would have indeed been "glad tidings" worthy of the season. No; I had to make up my mind to it, that considering my distance from home, and the irregularities caused by Christmas holidays, etc., I must expect to wait a month at least before I could get on board a Peninsular and Oriental steamship following in the wake of my examination papers.

CHAPTER XIV.

General remarks on the advantages and disadvantages of a Commission from the Ranks—Sergeants do not wish for Commissions—Popular errors about Army life — Sergeant's life and duties pleasant and interesting—A more educated class should make the Army their profession—A suggestion as to a possible means of getting good N.C.O.

Conclusion—Christmas at Gibraltar—The telegram.

AND now having described (however unworthily) my own personal experience of the life of a British soldier—private, corporal, and sergeant—in barracks, camp, and troopship; having conveyed, I hope, a *true* idea of his duties and pleasures, his comforts and trials; and while I imagine myself patiently waiting on at the North Front, still drilling recruits, and living in my little hut with my old comrade and "housekeeper;" it will not be amiss if I make some general remarks both as to the effect of the soldier's life upon me, and the effect (as far as I know it) of my brief sojourn in the ranks, and of my rapid promotion upon the other sergeants; and

besides this, I may have a word of advice or warning for any young man reading my narrative, and possibly being in want of a profession himself, feeling inspired to do as I have done.

To take first the point which is the most practical one as far as I was personally concerned—Did the sixteen months which I spent in the ranks make me more fit for my position as an officer? Without hesitation, I answer in the affirmative.

I think no one can doubt that an intimate acquaintance with all the details of the duty, daily and hourly performed by the various members of the regimental family, must be invaluable to any one having to take a share in the supervision of the execution of those duties. The chain of responsibility running throughout the regiment is composed of so many links, that it must be of infinite service for any one to know what amount of the strain has to be borne by each individual link. Then as to the duties themselves. From those most important ones performed by the senior sergeants, of regulating the work to be done each day by the men under them, down to the merest trifle of fatigue duty or method of cleaning accoutrements, the benefit arising from the knowledge of one and all was continually

being proved to me during my service as an officer. The difficulties attending some of them, as compared with others, would often enable me to treat the neglect of them with greater certainty of a just severity or leniency. I could and did often appeal to the men themselves, to allow that my practical knowledge of their duties enabled me to form a right opinion as to how those duties could be carried out.

After mixing for some time with my brother officers, I learnt that those with only a few years' service had very little acquaintance with the routine work of the regiment; but that the adjutants and captains, especially those who were really fond of their profession, did acquire, by length of observation, just the same knowledge that I had learnt in a readier and more practical way.

And I must remark here that great injury and injustice may be done unwittingly by officers, who, without sufficient insight into the minor details of soldiers' life, come to erroneous and perhaps hasty conclusions; and blame, possibly punish, their men for little omissions of duty which might be reasonably explained and understood by any one who had worked practically at those duties.

Allowing, then, that this experience of barrack-room life, and barrack-room discipline, and the power of understanding the character and feelings of the soldiers, were of real use to me from the first, the main consideration appears to be, how long a time ought I to have sacrificed in learning this valuable lesson? Was my sixteen months too long? for it must be remembered that it delayed my progress in the upper ranks of the service. The question might very fairly be put in this way. Supposing a young man was able to get a commission in the ordinary manner, would it be worth his while to spend say eighteen months in passing through the ranks, so as to acquire the knowledge I have referred to, before taking his position as an officer?

Although it may appear rather a contradiction to what I have urged above, I must say that, in my opinion, and constituted as our army is at present, I do not think it would be an advisable course except in very isolated cases, *i.e.* taking into consideration merely the best use to make of a certain length of time. With the ordinary slow promotion of our officers, I think the eighteen months would be spent to greater advantage by gaining a place or two in the list of lieutenants; because, however

much useful knowledge the officer might have obtained in the ranks, and although he might become in consequence a much more valuable member of the regiment, he would not be promoted to the higher grades one day the sooner. As a matter of fact, however, no one enlisting under present regulations could make the least *sure* of gaining a commission in eighteen months, nor even in two or three years, and I should consider that if a gentleman of means and education were to spend that length of time in the ranks it would be a great mistake—it would be too long for him to remain with propriety in a position so far removed from his natural one, and it would make a commission as sub-lieutenant almost valueless when he got it, because the loss of two or three years at the start would put him hopelessly behind his equals in age when he got up to the higher grades.

Therefore, whenever I am asked (as I often have been) whether I should advise others to try and gain a commission through the ranks, I invariably answer by saying that, successful as the experiment proved in my case, I should strongly recommend that it should not be tried except as a last resort. And the worst of it is that, in a great majority of instances,

the person applying for this advice has something against him, something which prevents him from getting his commission in the ordinary manner, and he vainly hopes that a year in the ranks will rectify what is wrong. Either he has gone to the bad in some way, or has got into some scrape, or perhaps he can't pass his army examinations, or possibly he is not of the right class of society to rank at once as an English "officer and gentleman." And in my opinion any one of these causes would prove fatal to him if he enlisted. Let any young man hoping to gain a commission within a reasonable time, by passing "the ordeal" of the ranks, first make sure that everything—position, education, intellect, character, and private means—are all in the most favourable condition to support his claim when the time comes for his Colonel to recommend him for promotion.

There is another point I ought to mention among the benefits arising from a short passage through the ranks. If it is still true that he who would learn to command, must first learn to obey, what better school can be found than that described in this chapter of my life? Unhesitatingly to obey an order, must become second nature to every soldier,

and, as our Colonel used to impress on us, obedience must not only be prompt and instantaneous, but cheerful; the most disagreeable duties must be undertaken with a willing heart, and a man must not even *look* disobedient. I firmly believe that a proper idea of "duty," and a power and habit of instantly complying with whatever one may recognise as a "call of duty," may be more thoroughly acquired in the ranks of our army, than in any other position. It was a lesson I learnt at that time; and I trust that it may remain with me, as I believe it will help me in any work I may have to do for the rest of my life.

There is yet one more advantage to mention, that I gained by my time in the ranks; but it will not be fair to make too much of it, in a general view of the experiment I made, as it was purely exceptional in my case. I refer to the friendly feeling that existed between the sergeants and myself, *after* I had gained my commission. But this would not have been possible if the general rule of the service had been followed; because, according to regulations, I must have been gazetted to a new regiment, and have started as an officer amongst total strangers. Therefore this friendly feeling, which in my case

might have developed into a valuable influence, would, in the natural order of things, have no existence when once the commission was gained. It was the source of very great satisfaction to me, during the few years that I served as an officer, and nothing pleased me better than to be appealed to, as an old friend, to help my former comrades in their troubles, or to forward their interests.

Having enumerated, on my side of the question, the many advantages that accrued from my service in the ranks, I must now refer to the possible disadvantage it was to the other non-commissioned officers in the regiment, to have me passed so rapidly over their heads. Although my success depended entirely on this quick promotion, it was a matter I always felt very sensitive about, and it would have caused me real distress had I thought anything unfair was being done on my account. But my Colonel (and all that know him, know him to be a man of his word) gave me distinctly to understand from the first, that he could only promote me if I proved myself to be the best man of my rank, according to the rules of the service; that I must, in fact, beat the men at their own trade. And, without being egotistical, I may say that, under the short service system, it was

really no difficult matter for me to do this. I have known captains and colour-sergeants absolutely at a loss to know how to find a single private fit to be entrusted with the lance-corporal's stripe, and sometimes it is a hard matter to prevent corporals and lance-sergeants giving up their posts; feeling, I suppose, unfitted or disinclined for the responsibility involved by their position. When I joined, however, things were not so bad as that, and there were many sergeants belonging to the old long service system, who were as trustworthy as could be wished, and probably more capable of enforcing discipline, and of dealing with bad characters, than I ever should have been. I never passed over the heads of these senior sergeants, except when I got my commission, but I believe I may safely appeal to their treatment of me, to prove that in *their* eyes I was not pushed on unfairly. There is no doubt that I was looked on, from the very first, as "an outsider," and that the privates and corporals whom I walked past so quickly, were the real friends and comrades of the sergeants; yet these men treated me with an uniform cordiality and consideration worthy of all praise, and I can never believe that their frank treatment of me was, in any way, a

cloak for discontent or grumbling at my advancement.

I do not suppose it will ever become at all usual for gentlemen to enlist for the mere purpose of making themselves more useful as officers; but were it the case, no doubt some regulations would have to be introduced for enabling such aspirants to be made supernumeraries of their rank; otherwise, if there were three or four at the same time in any one regiment, it might make a serious block in the promotion of ordinary soldiers.

I hope it will not be inferred from anything I have said that I kept myself entirely aloof from the other sergeants; for although (as I believe I have remarked before) I always felt in myself that I could not be on the same sort of footing with them as I should have been with my more natural friends, yet I always tried to conceal this from my "comrades in arms," and to make them think that there was very little difference between us. The successful accomplishment of this was rather amusingly proved at the time when it was well known that I might be "gazetted" at once. I was naturally the subject of general attention, and friendly sergeants would often discuss with me my coming promotion and the great

change that was so soon likely to be made in my position. I remember one sergeant advising me to be on my guard when I first went into the officers' mess: to try and behave like other officers; that with care I might be able to live as well as they did; and that I ought to work up for being adjutant, because then I could *make money* by the perquisites! How forgetful this sergeant must have been, when only sixteen months before I had been pointed at as "the recruit with £800 a year." For all this sort of advice I professed to be very grateful; and my friend would go away thinking that he had done a really good turn to a fortunate comrade, who would soon be feeling very uncomfortable (as he himself would have been) at having to live in the society of gentlemen!

It is just possible that in this way I may have played my part rather too well, and by trying to make myself thoroughly one of themselves, I may have led some sergeants to think that they were as much entitled to a commission as I was. I know that one man in the regiment did take this line; but he was an exception, and the majority maintained that I had worked hard for my commission and deserved success. In leaving this subject, I must say that I

had nothing whatever to complain of in the manner in which I was treated by my companions; I have nothing but praise for their conduct, and a most pleasant recollection of the friendship that existed between us. I only hope these feelings are reciprocated by them.

It can hardly have escaped the notice of any one who has followed me thus far, that my experience leads me to the firm conviction that it is quite an exception to meet a sergeant who is *bonâ fide* anxious for a commission as a combatant officer. They know that their means would not permit of their living on equal terms with other officers, and that they would be too far removed from their natural life and habits to make such a radical change at all congenial.

From what I have said in the last few pages, it will also appear evident that I am far from recommending the experiment I tried to be undertaken haphazard by other gentlemen.

But there is one point which, in conclusion, I should like to urge most strongly, and I think my experiences entitle me to give a very decided opinion upon it.

In the first place, I absolutely deny that there is anything degrading or lowering in the life and duties

of the English soldier. If a man is naturally of a depraved character, he will find opportunities for following his inclinations wherever he may be living. But a steady man can keep as free from lowering habits and bad company in the army as in any other profession. Foolish mothers may break their hearts over a son who "goes to 'list," but "though they weep, they know not why."

It is, of course, a fact that in every regiment there are some men who are distinctly bad characters of the lowest type, mere "gaol-birds;" and while we trust entirely to voluntary enlistment, or until commanding officers are given greater powers of getting rid of these general and public nuisances, there will always remain a few of them, to ruin the name of the army to which they belong. But it is not generally known how entirely these men are left to themselves, and avoided by all respectable soldiers, and there is probably no connection at all between them and their non-commissioned officers, except when the latter order them to the guard-room, or give evidence against them at a court-martial.

The next thing I wish to notice is this: that the life of a sergeant, both as regards his daily duties and daily comforts, is one which any young man of

active habits and character, who comes from what are termed either the working or artisan classes, need not despise; and I believe that if the true state of the case was more generally known, many men of a better class would make the army their profession. I look back myself with real pleasure to the work and life of a sergeant, and I do not know any occupation or trade pursued by members of the class I allude to that can compare with it. And it seems to me that there are just now a considerable number of men, who are not fitted for, and are in fact educationally too good for any mere manual work; they are on the look-out for positions as clerks, or accountants, or for some situation where their brains can be of service to them. But how frequently, alas, it happens that they fail utterly in gaining what they wish for. The competition is too great, and they linger on month after month, vainly hoping that something will turn up, and probably end by having to accept work which is really below them. If only some of this class would make up their minds to throw on one side all old prejudices, and believe me when I say that the service of their Queen and country is a noble and interesting profession, in which there can be found

many posts requiring tact and intelligence, the army itself would be a gainer by their presence, and they would make certain of passing rapidly through the lower grades, to assume the responsible duties of the higher non-commissioned ranks.

But before we can expect to get this better class to "take the shilling," and join the ranks of our army, it seems most probable that some alterations must be made in the terms of engagement to be entered into between them and "the service." The men I have referred to would expect to make a definite profession of whatever they embarked in, therefore "short service" is altogether out of the question for them. I have always thought that "short service" is a very reasonable and proper scheme for the privates of the army, provided, of course, that "the reserve" formed thereby is a force to be relied on,—a force to be called out *whenever* regiments are required for active service—the "reserve men" joining their own regiments, to serve under their own officers. But the shorter the service of the private men, the longer in reason ought to be the service of the sergeants and senior non-commissioned officers. And again, the shorter the service of the former, the harder and more trying is the work of the latter,

therefore these ought to have greater privileges and be on a different footing from the moment their responsibilities begin. Has it ever occurred to our army reformers to take into consideration the feasibility of a special form of enlistment for men who should train for the upper grades of non-commissioned rank from the very first, who should indeed merely enlist to become sergeants? They would of course have to pass through every grade (as I did), but with the understanding that they would not be detained in the lower positions longer than was necessary for them to master all details, and qualify for the next step. They would, in fact, be pushed on rapidly until, as lance-sergeants, they could take their place in the sergeants' mess, for it is from that date that the position and comfort of soldiers is so vastly improved. But even before that step was reached there might be many indulgences granted, such as liberty to remain out of barracks after the ordinary hour for "tattoo," without having to obtain a "pass," not necessarily every night, but according to some fixed regulation; then also it might be an understood thing for them to employ a bâtman as soon as they had acquired the art of looking after their accoutrements for themselves; they might even

be excused from the more menial fatigue duties while they remained as privates, although these really need not trouble any one, as I showed how, in my own case, I had nothing to do that could be counted a hardship.

If we follow out this idea to the end, I am afraid we must face the great *crux* of army reformers, and either pensions must be re-introduced, or the Government must distinctly undertake to provide employments or situations for their faithful servants after a certain number of years with the colours.

Supposing this idea seemed likely to attract young men of a desirable character, to supply what all allow at present to be a sad deficiency in our army,—to bring us recruits of sufficient standing and education to make trustworthy non-commissioned officers,—"the service" would justly have to bargain on its side that any one wishing to serve under these conditions should be able to produce some such certificate of good character as would be demanded from any man in civil life applying for a position of responsibility; and it might also require proof of education of a sufficiently high standard to pass the army examinations of the second class, which is at present the necessary qualification for the rank of sergeant.

But whether fresh regulations were made on this subject or not, I feel sure that any intelligent and active young man would easily and quickly reach a position in the Army that would be both comfortable and interesting, and which would carry with it continual opportunities of exercising tact and influence.

And now, to conclude my narrative, I will mention, for the satisfaction of myself and [may I hope] of those who have followed me thus far, the final scenes of my life as one of the "rank and file" of the English Army.

I had calculated that my examination papers, and the verdict of the Board of Officers who examined me, would reach London about the middle of December, and that in all probability a month would elapse before my name appeared in print in the *Gazette*. So I had to put a cheerful face on the delay, and settle down again to my easy work at the North Front.

We worked off one batch of the recruits, and began again immediately on a second lot; which we took as a hopeful sign that we were considered by those in authority to have done our duty in

a satisfactory manner. I was personally very glad to remain in the "huts;" for I had discovered by this time that the only part of my soldier's life that I at all disliked was living in the barrack-room. On the North Front detachment, with my little room almost to myself, I was comparatively as happy as the day, or night, was long.

Time sped on, and Christmas came round again, and with it the usual festivities. Wherever English soldiers are quartered, I am sure they do their best to carry out the historical English Christmas. It was certainly rather strange to be able to enjoy a bathe in the sea before breakfast, and to find the weather just pleasant for a game of cricket; but, setting aside these little innovations, everything went on in the most correct style. The men busied themselves in decorating their rooms; a shilling a head was provided by the officers and the regimental fund to give the men a good dinner, and many and serious consultations took place in the barrack-room to decide how the money was to be expended, and who was to be chosen to act as "public orator," and propose the Captain's health.

It may be amusing to mention what was actually bought for our detachment of 55 men. I have a record of the details before me, viz.—first, two large joints of pork and a joint of mutton—this in addition to the usual ration of beef, of 1 lb. per head; second, an immense amount of pickles, [pork and pickles seem a *sine qua non* for a soldier's Christmas dinner]; and finally, the ingredients for 70 lbs. of plum pudding—a simple dinner perhaps, but substantial.

I did not myself share in this repast, as I accepted an invitation to dine with one of the chaplains. I had also been invited to "dine and sleep" at another friendly house, but this I refused, as I did not like to be away from my men on Christmas night. But although I feared a row, the men all behaved excellently, and I thereby escaped a most unpleasant duty of throwing cold water on Christmas rejoicings. The holidays over, I settled down again to steady work, but this time not for long. On 7th of January I was parading my men about half-past twelve. We had been out firing, at target practice; and, as my rule was with the recruits, I made them clean their rifles and parade with them before dinner, to satisfy me that they were not left

about dirty in the rooms. I had hardly got on parade, however, before a civilian telegraph clerk presented himself to me, and handed me a telegram. Although, no doubt, my heart gave an extra strong beat when I recognised the fact that the telegram was from England, I merely thanked the official, and, putting it in my pocket unopened, inspected the arms with all proper ceremony, and dismissed the men.

When I reached my little room, I made the happy discovery that I was at last an officer, a Sub-lieutenant in my own regiment, and actually held in my grasp the reward of my labours.

Through the kind consideration of my Colonel I left the North Front detachment that very night, and moved into officers' quarters at the South Barracks.

When I dressed next morning, the sergeant's scarlet tunic was left lying on a chair, and I appeared in a more sombre suit of "plain clothes." When I left my room and passed the barrack-gate, the sentry greeted me (as I fancied) by "shouldering arms" with extra smartness, and wherever I walked, private men and sergeants all paid me the respect due to an officer, as if I had been

one all my life. Such is the discipline of our army, and such was the cordial and I may say "gentlemanly" behaviour of my former comrades.

With what satisfaction did I then look back to the 25th August sixteen months before, when I had taken, with doubt and anxiety, the "Queen's shilling;" but

> "When the shore is won at last,
> Who will count the billows past?"

THE END.

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